AN INVESTIGATION OF THE STRATEGIES THAT SAUDI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS USE WHEN WRITING IN ENGLISH AND THE LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES THEY ENCOUNTER: A COMPARATIVE AND CORRELATIONAL STUDY

by

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Abstract

This study investigates the writing strategies that Saudi university students utilise and the linguistic challenges they encounter during the process of writing in English. The study also compares the writing behaviour of two groups of writers: skilled vs. less skilled and male vs. female writers. Further, the possible inter-relationships between the main writing strategies and major linguistic challenges are explored. Data was collected using a writing proficiency test, think-aloud protocols (TAPs), observation, written compositions and stimulated recalls. The main sample consisted of 28 participants (14 skilled vs. 14 unskilled writers, 18 male vs. 10 female writers). Data analysis reveals that the writers frequently use ten writing strategies and encounter ten linguistic challenges. Some of the strategies are used more frequently by the skilled writers while others are more common among the unskilled ones. Similarly, male writers generally utilise fewer writing strategies than their female peers. While no significant differences are found between male and female writers in any one type of error, unskilled writers were found to make a larger number of errors in each category compared to the skilled writers. The study concludes with implications and recommendations for English writing pedagogy and research.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved wife, Dr Nouf,

and my wonderful daughters, Linda and Myrna.

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List of Abbreviations

L1	First language
L2	Second language
ESL	English as a second language
EFL	English as a foreign language
TAP	Think aloud protocol
SLA	Second language acquisition
LTM	Long-term memory
STM	Short-term memory

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

According to Silva (1993), "L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing. Therefore, L2 writing specialists need to look beyond L1 writing theories, to better describe the unique nature of L2 writing" (p. 669). Wang and Wen (2002) also emphasise that when composing in a second language (L2), writers have two languages, and they can either switch between them or use both of them. The researchers also argue that due to the lack of necessary attention to this difference by second language acquisition (SLA) educators, a limited understanding of the characteristics of L2 composing exists.

As a teacher of the English language for well over 10 years at school and college levels, I have had first-hand experience in identifying the weaknesses of Saudi students in terms of their general proficiency in English; particularly their writing. Regardless of the enormous efforts made and resources devoted and utilised to improve this situation, it remains largely unaddressed. This indisputable fact has drawn the attention of educators, curriculum designers and policy makers and has motivated them to investigate the low English proficiency level of students in Saudi Arabia (Al-Johani, 2009; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Fareh, 2010; Khan, 2011). Al-Seghayer (2011) describe the current standards of English teaching in public schools by stating that they "have deteriorated perhaps beyond hope of recovery" (p. 95).

This situation has strongly motivated me to investigate the challenges that are responsible for such a deficiency in English writing ability among Saudi students. Is it the outdated style of teaching writing, wherein the focus is the final product rather than the writing strategies? Is it the differences between the grammatical features of English and

Arabic (the students' first language (L1))? Is it the fact that Arabic is used by a large number of English teachers as the medium of instruction? I began my investigation by conducting a preliminary study of 25 Saudi college students so that I could assess their English writing proficiency and the linguistic features that were particularly challenging to them (more details about this study are provided in Chapter 4, Section 4.4). This was followed by a pilot and a main study to provide further evidence to the findings and to explore possible links between the linguistic challenges observed in the preliminary study and the strategies that the learners frequently adopt when writing in English.

1.2 Religious, social and economic status of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 by its founder, King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, who started reuniting the kingdom by capturing the capital city of Riyadh in 1902 and continued with this effort until he was able to reunite the entire Kingdom. The Kingdom has two holy mosques, namely, "Al Haram Al Maki" in Makkah, where Muslims direct their prayers towards "Kabah", and "Al Haram Al Nabawi" in Al Madinah Al Munawarah. This fact gave Saudi Arabia the privilege of leading both the Arab and Islamic worlds. Hence, Islam plays a significant role in the daily life and culture of the citizens of Saudi Arabia. Of note is that the Holy Quran is written in the Arabic language, and the Constitution and legislation of the country stem mainly from the Quran (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

As the second largest producer of crude oil in the world, Saudi Arabia is a major contender in the world economy; it is one of the 20 largest economies in the world. The excavation of oil has boosted the development of different sectors in the country, and amongst these, the field of education has received significant attention. According to the Ministry of Education, the number of universities across the country has increased to 37 in 2017.

1.3 Overview of the teaching of writing in Saudi Arabia

The educational system in Saudi Arabia was previously managed by the Directorate of Education, which was founded in 1925. Before that time, people relied on mosques and "katateebs", which were a very basic system in which people were taught the basic skills of reading and writing. The desire to learn Arabic was driven by the need to recite the holy Quran (Al-Liheibi, 2008; Alsharif, 2011).

In 1973, the Ministry of Education was founded. The first public schools were all male schools and were opened in 1930. Females were not allowed to engage in any form of educational activity until the 1960s when female schools were officially established. Complete segregation was maintained between male and female schools, and people in a number of regions articulated strong objection towards female education because of religious and cultural issues (Wiseman, 2010). However, a few years later, this view was totally changed, and female education became widespread. Gender segregation, however, continued to be practiced in all educational sectors in Saudi Arabia. Males and females, although fully segregated, receive the same educational input in terms of subjects and curricula, with only a few differences that are gender specific (Al-Johani, 2009). The school system consists of the following three stages: elementary school (six years), intermediate school (three years) and secondary school (three years). Students generally start school at the age of six.

Although English in Saudi Arabia is a foreign language, it is an important language because it is taught from grade four onwards. Passing the English course in schools is mandatory to progress to the next level. In addition, the English language is widely used in airports, hospitals, hotels, the Internet and so on. Most private companies prefer native-like English speakers to fill their job vacancies, and most professional colleges, such as medical colleges, engineering colleges, and scholarship programs, require a good knowledge of English for enrolment.

Students in public elementary schools start learning English from grade four, and they have two classes in English per week, each lasting 45 minutes. They study all four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. From intermediate school onwards, students have four classes in English per week. Teachers have identified the weaknesses of students in all the major areas of English proficiency; particularly in writing. They have cited not only time constraints but have identified that the large number of students in each class, which makes devoting enough time to teach all necessary English skills, especially writing, challenging for teachers (El-Sayed, 1983; Taher, 1999; Alharthi, 2012). Another factor that affects the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia is the use of a unified syllabus across the country. Teachers do not have the leeway to teach anything outside the curriculum. In fact, the curriculum itself does not adequately address writing practices, and teachers usually do not give students enough opportunities to practice their writing skills. Furthermore, the writing process is neglected throughout the tertiary level, so learners do not appreciate its importance, and they are also unable to utilise their theoretical understanding of the language in actual communication scenarios. El-daly (1991) state that "English was considered an academic course like history, geography or social studies. Our main task [as students] was to memorize a lot of grammatical rules, a lot of vocabulary and structures with a view to passing the course and moving ahead to the next level" (p. 3). Consequently, this has affected the students' development of their English writing skills, which have often been described as below average (see Al-Hozaimi, 1993; Al-Semari, 1993; Aljamhoor, 1996). El-daly (1991) has also found that writing is considered a linear process, in which the focus is primarily on the final product. Hence, this study sought to examine the extent to which writers use appropriate writing strategies, as well as the linguistic challenges they encounter when composing in the English Language.

1.4 Purpose of the study and research questions

This research has been conducted to investigate the composing processes and strategies of two groups of Saudi university students. The groups were divided into two categories. They were the skilled and unskilled category and the male and female category. This research also aims to shed light on the roles that writing proficiency and gender play in the use of these strategies. This study additionally examines the linguistic challenges that both groups of writers encounter when composing in the English language, as well as the causes that bring about these challenges.

Accordingly, the following three research questions are investigated in this study:

1. What are the main writing strategies that Saudi learners use when composing in English (L2)?

    1a. Do skilled and unskilled writers vary in the use of these strategies?

    1b. Do male and female writers vary in the use of these strategies?

2. What are the major linguistic challenges that Saudi learners encounter when composing in English?

    2a. Do skilled and unskilled writers vary in the challenges that they encounter?

    2b. Do male and female writers vary in the challenges that they encounter?

3. What is the relationship between the writing strategies that the students use when composing in English and the linguistic challenges they encounter?

1.5 Significance of the study

This research is significant for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners and particularly for Saudi learners of English for several reasons. First, this study investigated in depth, both the process and the product of L2 writing (English). It correlated the processes that writers use when composing in English with the linguistic challenges they encountered.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the correlation between writing processes and the linguistic challenges that EFL writers encounter. Previous studies in the field either examined the use of L2 writing strategies (see e.g. Alam, 1993; Alhysonie, E., 2012; Alhysoni, M., 2008; Aljamhoor, 1996, Alnofal, 2003; Chaaban, 2010, Elshawish, 2014) or the linguistic errors that L2 writers make (see Al-Johani, 1982; Al-Aswad, 1983; Al-Sindy, 1994; Gamie, 2009; Ismail, 2010; Kamel, 1989). Those studies that attempted to examine both the process and the product of L2 writing (e.g. Alharthi, 2012; El-Aswad 2002) were descriptive in nature and did not attempt to compare them or to draw any links between them.

In addition, the present study is unique because it compares the writing processes and products of male and female writers and addresses the gender differences in this area. Most of the studies carried out in the literature focused on one gender only (e.g. Alharthi, 2012; Alhysonie, E., 2012; Alhysoni, M., 2008) or considered both genders as one group (e.g. Chaaban, 2010; El-Aswad 2002; Elshawish, 2014). The issue of gender is particularly important in Saudi Arabia and some Arab countries (e.g. the gulf countries, Jordan) because male and female students are segregated in education (i.e. they attend separate schools). Therefore, examining if any similarities or differences exist between the writing strategies that students use and/or the challenges they face when composing in English would be beneficial.

This study also explores the most challenging linguistic aspects that are applicable to both skilled and unskilled writers. By shedding light on such challenges, this research hopes to draw the EFL teachers' attention to them so that educators could help learners overcome such difficulties or at the very least, help to minimise and mitigate these difficulties.

This research uses a contrastive rhetoric approach to the study of the writers' linguistic errors. Therefore, the findings can hopefully help identify the extent to which the writers' L1 (Arabic) can be responsible for the challenges they encounter.

Finally, the present study is unique in the methodology it uses. The main sample consists of 28 participants (14 skilled & 14 unskilled, 18 male & 10 female writers). All these participants conducted the TAPs (think-aloud protocols) and participated in the stimulated recall interviews. Their written products (essays) were also analysed. However, most of the studies conducted in the Arab world in general, and particularly in Saudi Arabia, used relatively small samples of only 11 or 12 participants (e.g. Alharthi, 2012; Alhysonie, E., 2012; Aljamhoor, 1996, Chaaban 2010, Alhysoni, M., 2008; El-Aswad 2002; Elshawish, 2014), which could have affected the reliability and generalisability of the results.

This study is therefore expected to fill in the gap in the literature and contribute to the development of an L2 writing model. It does so by providing a detailed profile of the writing strategies that learners use and also by correlating them to the linguistic challenges they face. The findings of this study also offer pedagogical suggestions for the teaching of writing in Saudi Arabia and the majority of other Arab countries, especially because the teaching milieu in these areas is still largely product oriented.

1.6 Challenges encountered in the study

Najran University in the southern province of Saudi Arabia was supposed to have been the target context of this research. However, after formalities were arranged and just a few days before I was scheduled to start the data collection process, the province of Najran was declared a no-fly zone in the late hours of March 25, 2015 and the war called "Asifat Al-Hazm" commenced. This incident was triggered by a military coup in Yemen (a neighbouring country in the south of Saudi Arabia), followed by heavy shelling towards in close proximity to the border of Saudi Arabia, where the University of Najran is located. For safety reasons, I was advised not to travel to the University of Najran. Fortunately, I had in the interim,

obtained permission to collect data from another university. A few days later, the University of Najran suspended all study programmes for that semester.

Another challenge I encountered was related to the TAPs, which served as my main data collection tool. The TAPs required special and laborious preparation. Firstly, I needed to set up timetables for conducting the pilot study, distributing the writing proficiency test and collecting writing samples from the students in the English Department. Due to time constraints, coordinating with the instructors so that we could agree on a convenient time to meet with all sections and thus cover all the students in the department was difficult. Secondly, the midterm exams were approaching, so both instructors and students were busy preparing for them. Nonetheless, the procedure went smoothly because of the great cooperation of the dean of the college, who expressed his willingness to facilitate the data collection for this research and directed the head of the department to offer every help needed.

Another challenge was that the conducting of the TAPs involved audio taping the participants while they were engaged in the composing process. Convincing them to take part in this essential phase of the research protocol was challenging. Fortunately, I overcame this hurdle by assuring them that only I and two other researchers would have access to their data. Furthermore, I assured them that the data would be confidential and would be given codes rather than directly be associated with the writers' identities. The participants were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and without providing any reason. These measures helped successfully convince them to participate in the research.

Another challenge encountered in the study was collecting data from the female participants because female students were segregated completely from the male ones, and establishing any form of communication with the female students was unacceptable. Therefore, I decided to seek the help of a female lecturer to collect the data from the female students. Although she was female, encouraging the female students to participate in the

TAPs was not an easy task for her. Initially, they were hesitant as they did not want their voices to be recorded. However, after being assured about the confidentiality of the data and their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, they agreed to participate.

Furthermore, transcribing and coding the TAPs, as well as marking the written pieces of work required a tremendous amount of time and effort. I also needed to listen to the recordings and read the essays concurrently for a number of times so that I could account for how certain errors came about. This task was demanding and time consuming, but it was vital in obtaining accurate and reliable data.

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 provides information on the background of the study and the teaching of writing in Saudi Arabia. It also discusses the purpose of the study, its research questions, the significance of the study and the challenges encountered.

Chapter 2 presents background information on the nature of writing, theories/models of L1 writing, classifications of writing processes and strategies, and the influence of L1 on L2 writing. It also reviews previous research on L2 writing in different settings, such as the EFL, Arab and Saudi contexts.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on contrastive rhetoric, error analysis and the differences between English and Arabic grammar. It also examines relevant studies on the linguistic errors of Arab EFL writers.

Chapter 4 focuses on the methodology used in this study. It provides comprehensive information on the research design, the instruments used to conduct the research, the preliminary study and the pilot study. It also describes how the data are analysed, including

transcribing and coding the TAPs, scoring the written product of the TAPs and analysing the stimulated recall interviews.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the data analysis in relation to the writing strategies that Saudi learners adopt and utilise when composing in English. Whenever possible, the findings are linked with previous studies in the L2 writing field.

Chapter 6 reports the main linguistic challenges that Saudi learners encounter when composing in English. It also discusses the findings in relation to the available literature.

Chapter 7 discusses the possible relationships between the writing strategies that Saudi learners use when composing in English and the main linguistic challenges they encounter. Finally, a tentative model of L2 writing of learners is provided.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusions about the findings and the implications of these findings for the L2 writing model and English writing instruction. It also discusses the limitations of the study and offers recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: The Nature of Writing

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a brief summary of the process of writing, including several definitions of writing and the shift in focus from product to process. It will then discuss the different writing models and theories of L1, including the theoretical framework used in this study, along with the advantages and limitations of such models and theories. Thereafter, the varied attempts made at proposing a theory or model of L2 writing over the years will be presented and critically analysed. This part will include the classifications of the processes and strategies of L2 writing, stages of L2 writing and a definition of each strategy. Finally, the chapter will review the literature on the influence of L1 on L2 writing, which will include studies on EFL writing by learners with different first languages, studies on EFL writing by Arab learners and studies on EFL writing by Saudi learners.

2.2 Definition of writing

The literature on writing abounds with several definitions of writing. According to the Collins Dictionary, writing refers to "a group of letters or symbols written or marked on a surface as a means of communicating ideas by making each symbol stand for an idea, concept, or thing, by using each symbol to represent a set of sounds grouped into syllables (syllabic writing), or by regarding each symbol as corresponding closely or exactly to each of the sounds in the language (alphabetic writing)". Another definition of writing was proposed by Richards, Platt and Weber (1985) as follows: "[It is a] system of written symbols which represent the sounds, syllables or words of a language" (p. 313). The difficulties in writing in English stem from several challenges that writers need to address. Notably, White (1988)

distinguished between writing as a process of learning and writing as a product of learning as the two main aspects of writing. These are discussed in Section 2.3 below.

2.3 The writing process and product

The need for a thorough understanding of the complexity of writing emerged in the middle of the 1960s. Researchers started to address the way in which people wrote rather than what they wrote. According to Jones and Tetroe (1987), the focus before that period was the final composed product, as researchers believed that writers already knew what they wanted to write before engaging in the actual writing process. The pre-dominant perception on the assessment of the quality of writing at that time was mainly driven by the correct use of grammar and structure.

Rohman (1965), one of the pioneers in the field of writing, made the first attempt to shift the attention from product to process by proposing the following classification of writing: (1) pre-writing, which includes thinking about what to write; (2) writing, which represents the process of transferring thoughts into written words; and finally, (3) re-writing, which includes checking spelling, grammar and other aspects of writing. This model is important because it considers thinking to occur before and after writing. However, although Rohman proposed three stages of writing, it was presented as a linear process which did not show the recursive nature of writing.

Soon after this attempt, Emig (1971) investigated the way in which composing and behaviour were formed. TAPs and case studies were used to determine how written products were produced and what behavioural activities took place throughout the process of composing. This research introduced, for the first time, the term *recursiveness*, as she found that the process of writing involves thinking not only in the pre-writing stage but also at any time during the course of the writing stage. This finding was later supported by several

educators in the field, such as Perl (1979), Flower and Hayes (1980), Zamel (1982) and Raimes (1985), who asserted that the process of writing is not linear but recursive in nature. The concept of *recursiveness* is important to this research as the majority of the participants have been observed to follow non-linear patterns when writing in English. This concept has also encouraged educators to expand their research on writing, and consequently, several theoretical models of writing have been proposed. These included Rohman's (1965) stage model, Flower and Hayes' (1980) model and Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming models. These models are discussed in detail in the following section.

2.4 Models of L1 writing

In this section, I discuss three influential models in the field of L1 writing and point out their strengths and limitations.

2.4.1 The Stage Model

This model was developed in 1965 by Rohman. It is considered one of the first L1 writing models, if not the first (see Section 2.3). Rohman examined the writing of a group of students and concluded that composing consists of the following three stages: pre-writing, writing and re-writing. He emphasised that the process of thinking happens before writing. The moment writers put their thoughts into written words is called writing. Finally, the process of re-writing is restricted to checking grammar, punctuation and spelling. Since this model limits the production of ideas to the pre-writing stage, it fails to explain the complexity of writing, as it presents composing as a linear process instead of a recursive one.

2.4.2 Flower and Hayes' (1980) Model

One of the most famous and well-recognised L1 writing models is the cognitive process theory of writing, which was proposed by Flower and Hayes (1980) (see Figure 2.1). According to Hyland (2003), this model is the most commonly used one in the field of teaching L2 writing.

This new paradigm was a result of the fine-tuning of Emig's (1971) and Perl's (1979) ideas. It indicates that three mental processes occur in writers' minds throughout the composing act. These processes are as follows:

(1) Generating, in which plans, content and structure are produced

(2) Translating, in which the produced plans and ideas are formulated into a written language

(3) Reviewing, in which the writer assesses what has been written

In their model, Flower and Hayes (1980) divided the writer's world into three mental elements that interact with one another recursively. These three elements are as follows:

1) The task environment, which consists of all external factors that may affect the performance of the task. This element can include the type of the assigned topic, the audience and the text produced thus far.

2) The writer's long-term memory (LTM), which refers to the knowledge retrieved from the LTM whilst engaging in composing, such as knowledge of the topic, the genre, audience, writing plans, writing processes and strategies and rhetorical problems, including the grammatical structure and vocabulary.

3) The writing processes, which refers to the thinking processes that writers undergo throughout the act of composing. The three writing processes are planning, translating and reviewing, which are all controlled by a monitor. Each of these is further divided into sub-processes. The writing process is the most crucial and complex element of the model, as it encompasses the writing strategies.

The three sub-processes of the planning process, as presented in Flower and Hayes' (1980) model, are "generating content, organizing it, and setting up [the] goals and procedures for writing" (p. 209). First, planning, according to Kellogg (1987), includes generating plans, organising them and setting the goals to accomplish them throughout the composing process. Flower and Hayes (1981) defined planning as "putting ideas into visible language" (p. 373). The role of planning is to obtain information from the task environment and LTM, and then using such information to establish the goals or plans for the production of written text.

Second, translation or formulating refers to the act of transforming the produced plans into acceptable forms of written language throughout the translation process. This process is guided by those plans that correspond to the writer's memory information. Flower and Hayes, as well as Murray, used the term "translating" instead of composing, writing, transcribing or drafting to describe the actual act of writing because they believed that the plans generated in the planning phase could be represented by forms other than language, such as imagery.

Third, the reviewing process consists of two sub-processes, namely, evaluating and revising. This process is concerned with reading, assessing and fine-tuning the quality of the produced written text. It involves identifying and correcting any error that may be spotted. Evaluating whether the set goals have been met also helps. Flower and Hayes added that revision could occur at the level of written or unwritten language. It could also occur at any time during the composing process, which could result in a new episode of planning and translating. All the three elements of the writing process are controlled by a monitor that sets the boundaries between the different stages and the time to switch between them; it identifies when and where to move next. The role of the monitor differs from one writer to another. Some writers switch from planning to translating the moment they can do so, whereas others spend a longer time to move to the next stage. Moreover, Flower and Hayes (1981) stated that short and simple written products result from reliance on writing from the outset instead of

planning. The use of the monitor model shows individual differences in goal setting between writers, which are reflected in the style of their written products.

Flower and Hayes (1981) also proposed that the three processes of thinking interact with one another in a recursive pattern and could be embedded within one another or occur at the same time with other processes. In other words, to produce a sentence, writers refer to a previous sentence. Reviewing a sentence could show the need for some revisions, which may ultimately include generating new ones and so on (Alhaysoni, 2008). To conclude, Tobin (2008) asserted that the uniqueness of this cognitive theory of writing stems from the fact that "the writing process is recursive and goal-driven" (p. 66).

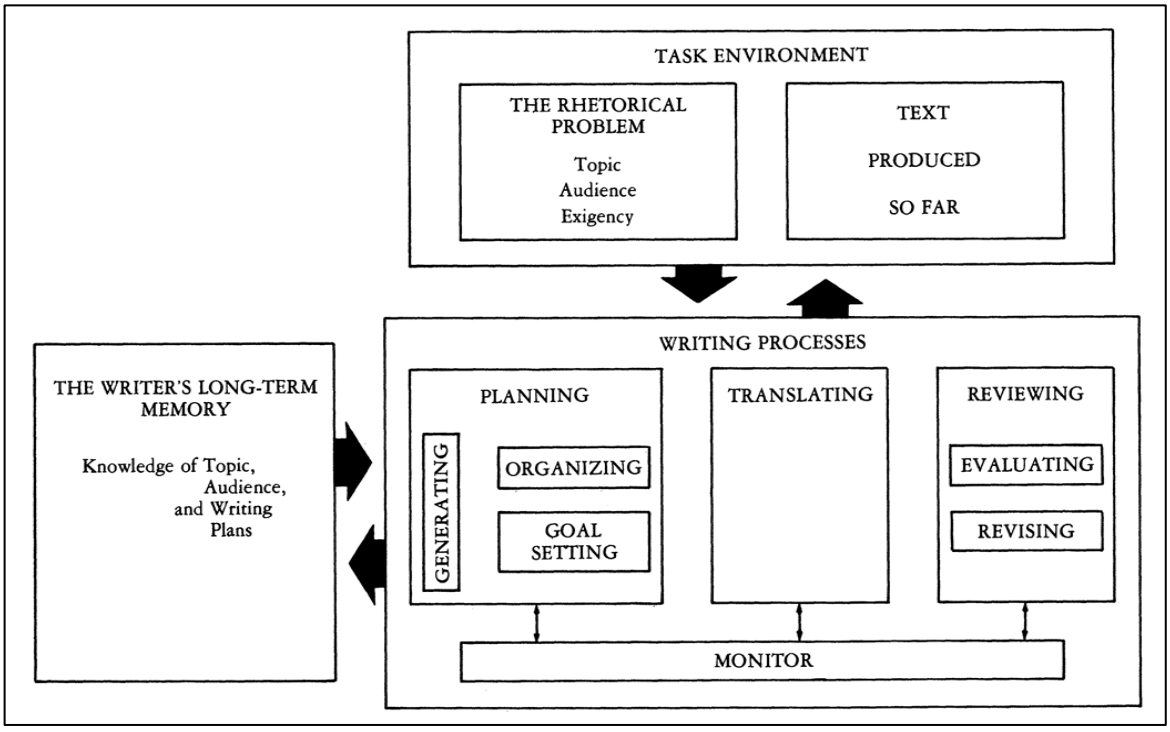

Figure 2.1. Flower and Hayes' (1980) Model.

2.4.2.1 Criticism of Flower and Hayes' (1980) Model

Flower and Hayes' (1980) model of the writing process has undoubtedly served as the basis of the majority of studies examining the writing processes in LI and L2. It is considered among the most significant models in L1 and L2 writing research (Zimmerman, 2000). However, Flower and Hayes' (1980) model of the writing process was also criticised by several educators, such as Bizzell (1982), Cooper and Holzman (1983), Faigley (1986), North (1987), Beretier and Scardamalia (1987), Grabe and Kaplan (1996), Zimmerman (2000) and Macaro (2003).

The criticism put forward by Faigley and Witte (1981) is related to the nature of the verbal protocol of the model, as it relies on one instrument only, which requires writers to write and describe their thoughts simultaneously. A similar criticism was made by Cooper and Holzman (1983) on the doability of the protocol, as it requires special training and the fact that not every writer can necessarily produce valid data. For example, this technique may not provide the required explanations for certain behaviours or cognitive processes if writers verbalise what they are doing rather than what they are thinking. According to Beretier and Scardamalia (1987), Flower and Hayes' writing process model relied only on inferred data in the protocol. Beretier and Scardamalia also argued that the acquired data of TAPs was limited to the produced cognitive actions, but that such data did not account for the actual cognitive process. Moreover, they pointed out that the model drew from results based on an experimental study which could capture the activities of the cognitive process only and not the product of the cognitive behaviour.

Another drawback of Flower and Hayes' writing process model was stated by North (1987), as cited in Grabe and Kaplan (1996). He claimed that this model "is much too vague to satisfy [the] criteria for formal model building" (p. 92). In other words, the model does not

give an adequate explanation of the way a text is formed. Following the flow of arrows in the model could also be misleading (see Figure 2.1).

Zimmerman (2000) criticised the model in several aspects. He claimed that Flower and Hayes' writing model was built on a relatively small sample of skilled writers, so its use cannot be generalised. He added that,

> Of a rather deductive and hypothetical character, i.e. it has a comparatively small empirical basis. On the one hand, the few data on which it is based are from apparently quite competent L1 writers. Understandably in a first phase of a model building, a thorough, full-fledged quantitative analysis of informants with a wider range of writing competence was not attempted. (p. 74).

Furthermore, Zimmerman (2000) argued that the model heavily focused on the first sub-process (planning), whereas the second sub-process (revising) was noticeably neglected, and the third sub-process (translation) was overlooked.

In another study, El-Mortaji (2001) made several criticisms of Flower and Hayes' writing model. She raised a question on the validity of the model's application to bilingual or multi-lingual writers, as it was designed for monolingual writers (skilled British writers). She also noticed the absence of some fundamental elements in the model, such as affect and communication strategies. Finally, she pointed out the possible confusion that might emerge in using the term 'translation' with bilingual or multi-lingual writers.

2.4.2.2 Justification for the use of Flower and Hayes' (1980) Model

From the review of the most famous writing models in the literature and the criticisms on these models, Flower and Hayes' (1980, 1981) model of the writing process is still considered one of the most commonly used and reliable writing models. It is also the basis and foundation of many other models that subsequently emerged. This model of writing is

also the most appropriate one for the current study, and no other model in the literature is able to capture cognitive elements better than Flower and Hayes' model. According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996), this model is the most commonly used and cited in the literature on both L1 and L2 writing. It sheds light on the composing process and emphasises the interaction and the recursive nature of writing, both theoretically and empirically. Flower and Hayes successfully managed to present a model that is testable and explicitly applicable (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). The value of this model was confirmed by numerous educators in the field of L1 and L2 writing. The model covers all elements of the composing processes, namely, pre-writing, writing and revising, which the participants in the current study also followed. Therefore, Flower and Hayes' (1980, 1981) model was utilised as a theoretical framework to analytically approach the TAP data of the present study.

2.4.3 Bereiter and Scardamalia's Models

In an attempt to fill in what they claimed to be a gap in Flower and Hayes' (1980, 1981) model of the writing process, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) proposed a model of L1 writing process that addresses the individual differences in the writing processes between skilled and less-skilled writers. The model was based on a research which used TAP data, self-reports and analyses of written products. Bereiter and Scardamalia argued that skilled writers write differently from less-skilled ones; it was thus concluded that a single writing model is insufficient to explain adequately the writing processes for both groups.

Accordingly, they introduced two different writing models of L1 writing. The first model is the knowledge-telling model for unskilled writers (Figure 2.2), and the second model is the knowledge-transforming model for skilled writers (Figure 2.3). These models attempt to justify the different uses of writing processes among expert and poor writers, for example,

why children or poor writers appear to engage in actual writing without sufficient planning, in comparison with skilled writers.

According to Bereiter and Scardamalia, the knowledge-telling model for poor writers suggests that inexpert writers' behaviour includes less-complex activity. They added that these writers generate "content by topical and structural prompts, without strategic formulation of goals, subgoals, search criteria, and other components of problem-solving" (p. 348).

Bereiter and Scardamalia also claimed that poor writers tend to decrease the level of complexity of the writing process to make the task of transforming their cognitive thoughts to written forms easier. For example, they have been found to rely on the prompt of the given task and genre in an attempt to collect information about the topic. Another aspect that the model proposes is that inexperienced writers tend to ignore the challenging parts of writing activities, such as the context and the social aspect, and instead concentrate on the process of formulating thoughts into written words.

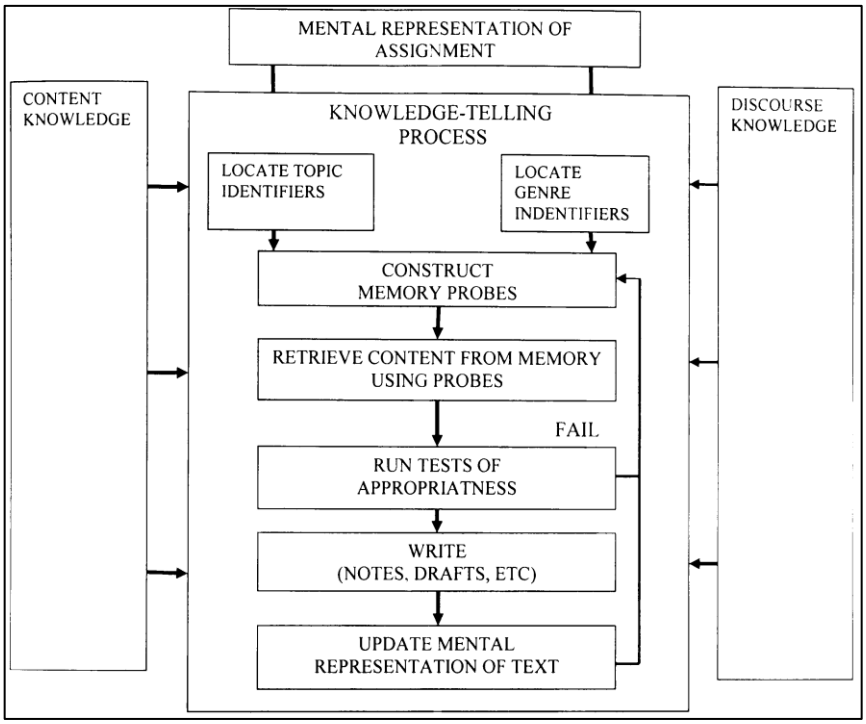

Figure 2.2. Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) Knowledge-telling Model.

In summary, Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) model of knowledge-telling has a significant contribution in the field of L1 writing; however, similar to other models, it has received several criticisms from different educators. According to Flower (1994), the model of knowledge-telling could be criticised as being cognitive and that it fails to provide an adequate explanation for the influence of context and social aspects. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) added that the model failed to elaborate "on specific model components: The problem space, the organization of the content knowledge, and the organization of rhetorical knowledge; and the ways the elaborated sources of information and problem representations are connected" (p. l27). Another criticism is that the component of language knowledge is lacking among inexperienced writers (Alhaysony, 2008). Scholfield (2006), as cited in Alhaysony (2008), explained that with regard to poor writers, the model does not mention reviewing, more specifically "surface reviewing" or editing, which low-level writers are known to do. It also proposes that poor writers are capable of identifying different genres (Alhaysony, 2008, p. 37). The criticism raised by Macaro (2003) in Section 2.4.2 above concerning Flower and Hayes' model as being limited to L1 could similarly be applicable to Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) model.

The knowledge-transforming model (Figure 2.3) seeks to address the writing process of skilled writers. Bereiter and Scardamalia stated that what differentiates skilled and less-skilled writers is the instantaneous interaction between two complex spaces: The content space and the rhetorical space. Skilled writers who utilise this model tend to go through more problem solving and goal setting. They attempt to detect the problems, determine what part is particularly problematic (content, audience or linguistics) and accordingly find a suitable way to address this challenge. The problems that emerge in this model are resolved instantly, as the composing prompt leads to the analysis of the problem and to goal setting, ultimately indicating that planning precedes writing. After the challenging issues are solved, writers use

the knowledge-telling element to generate writing (see Figure 2.2). Bereiter and Scardamalia explained that the problems linked to views and knowledge are solved in the content space, whereas those linked to the achievement of composition goals are solved in the rhetorical space. The act of instantaneous interaction between the two complex spaces occurs through the process of problem translation or the knowledge-telling process "affecting the analysis of the problem" (Alnofal, 2003, p. 22). Thus, Bereiter and Scardamalia came to the conclusion that in comparison with inexpert writers, skilled writers appear to be more engaged in problem solving as a consequence of the continuous interaction between the content and rhetorical spaces. Moreover, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) asserted that the knowledge-telling model is unique because it allows the writer to explicitly elaborate on the hypothesis, the specific goals and to link the audience and genre differences with writing task difficulties. These hypotheses and goals must be accomplished throughout the composing process.

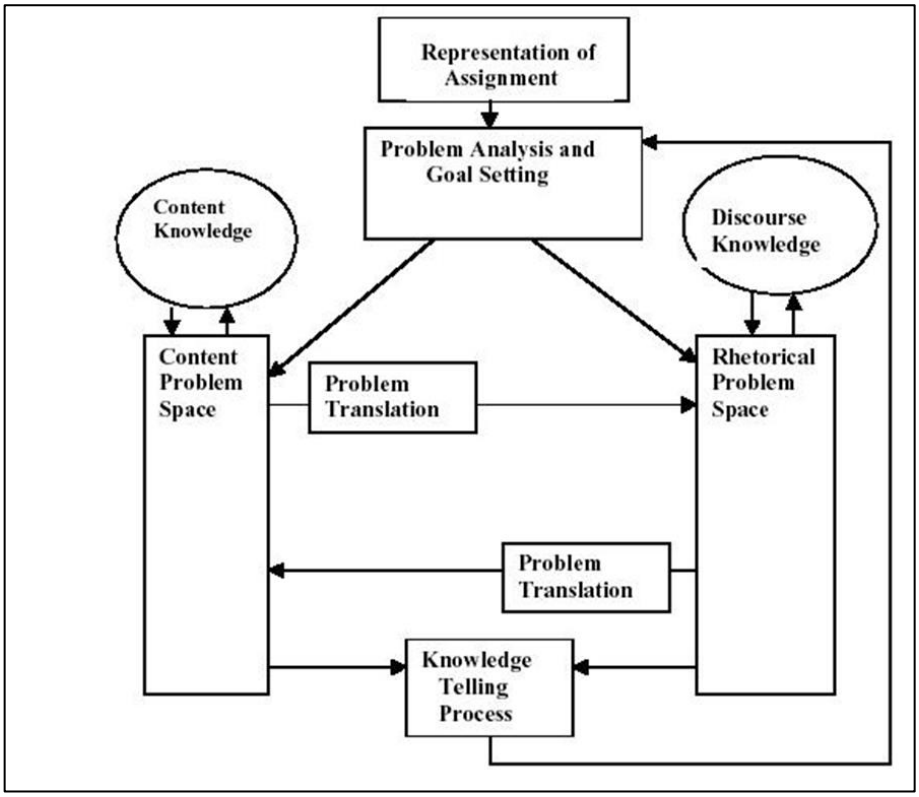

Figure 2.3. Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) Knowledge-transforming Model.

The two writing models proposed by Bereiter and Scardamalia have influenced the field of L1 writing and encouraged several debates among educators. The models explained the difference between experienced and poor writers. It also addressed the challenges caused by the differences between genres, the audience and the non-transferability of the mechanisms of writing across different genres (Alharthi, 2012).

However, like other previous models, Bereiter and Scardamalia's writing models have not escaped criticism by several pioneers in the field of writing. First, Flower (1994) argued that the model seems to fail in considering the 'influence of context on writing'. In other words, the nature of the model is purely cognitive, so social factors relating to writing are not considered (Flower, 1994). Another criticism was put forward by Grabe and Kaplan (1996), who stated that the model does not indicate clearly when and how writers make a cognitive transition between the knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming stages.

2.4.4 Conclusion on L1 writing models

The previous section presented several writing models proposed by educators in the field of L1 writing, along with the strengths of each of these models. One of the first influential models is the stage model proposed by Rohman (1956) (see Section 2.4.1). However, this model was heavily criticised for its proposed linear nature of writing and, consequently, its inability to account for the recursive nature of the writing process.

Bereiter and Scardamalia's models of writing, regardless of their acknowledged value in the field of L1 writing, are purely cognitive. They focus on the way in which content and plans are controlled in writing, whereas language challenges are not considered (see Section 2.4.3).

Although Flower and Hayes' (1981) model of the writing process was criticised for a number of reasons (Section 2.4.2.1), it is still the most acceptable and recognised model in the

field of L1 writing. Aside from its academic value, it enriches the field of writing instruction with a deeper understanding of how the interaction of the different writing processes occurs. In fact, it was the first attempt to refer to the recursive nature of writing. It also covers all the processes of writing that the participants in the current study were found to have utilised, namely, pre-writing, writing and revision. Consequently, this theoretical framework model has guided the data analysis in the present study.

2.5 Developing a model of the L2 writing process

As mentioned above, the effort to develop a writing model that discriminates between L1 and L2 is much needed. Educators have long urged for a model that considers the differences in the writing processes between native and non-native writers. In fact, some attempts to create an L2 writing model have been made, but these have all been based on L1 theories. Moreover, we are still far from reaching a comprehensive understanding of the distinctive nature of L2 writing, hence the urgent need for a theory (see Grabe, 2001; Silva, 1993; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Kraples, 1990; Krashen, 1984; Leki, 1992; Raimes, 1991). I will go on to discuss two studies that attempted to develop a model of EFL writing.

Based on the results of an investigation into the factors influencing the EFL writing of Japanese university students, Sasaki (1996) introduced the EFL writing ability model (see Figure 2.4), consisting of three variables, namely, L2 proficiency, L1 writing ability and L2 meta-knowledge, which influence the production of L2 writing. According to Sasaki, writing abilities in L1 and L2 are influenced by writing competence. He asserted that the use of L1 writing capability to produce L2 text is considered a writing strategy. Sasaki also stated that writing production could be enhanced with the benefit of having experience in L1 and L2 writing, as well as having a sense of confidence in L2 writing.

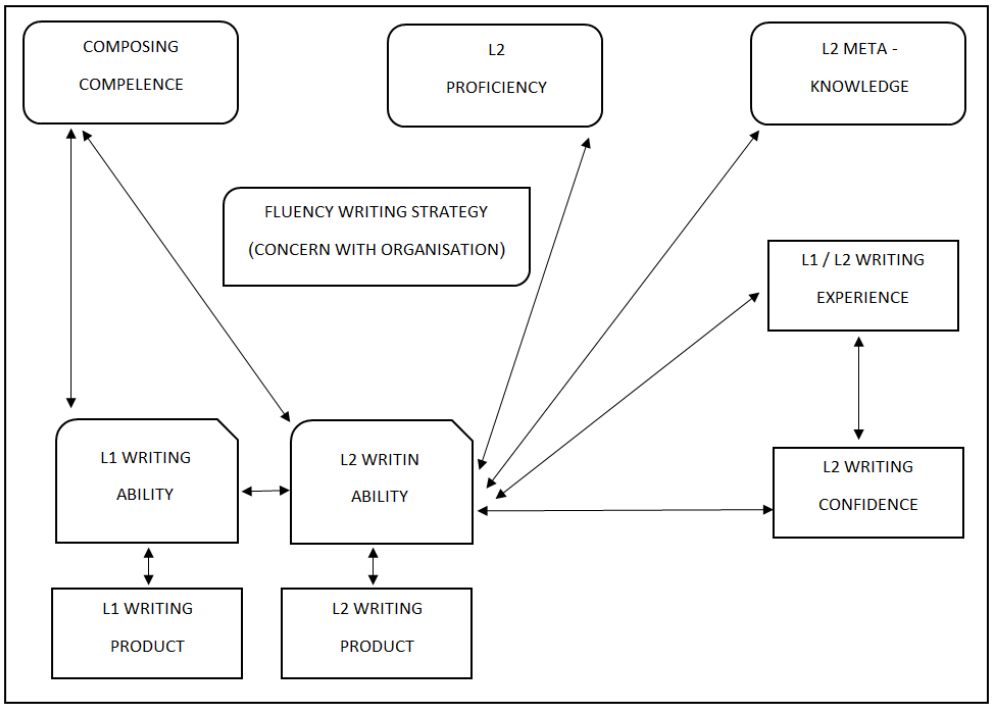

Figure 2.4. Sasaki's (1996) EFL Writing Ability Model.

Apparently, this model is only concerned with the components of the writing ability and its relationship to the written product. Thus, unlike Flower and Hayes' (1980) model (discussed in Section 2.4.2 above), Sasaki's (1996) model fails to account for writing as a process that involves a continuous interaction of several stages.

Another L2 model was proposed by Macaro (2003), and it was influenced by the model of Flower and Hayes (1981). Macaro appeared to agree with the three main processes of Flower and Hayes' model, which are planning, formulating and reviewing, with an emphasis on the dynamic function of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies when these are being monitored throughout the formulation phase and during the evaluation phase. He presented a model of L2 writing (Figure 2.5 below) that criticises that of Flower and Hayes (1981) by considering the influence of L1 on the formulating process. Macaro agreed with the planning, formulating and reviewing processes suggested by Flower and Hayes, but he emphasised the impact of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies during monitoring. Macaro

explained that each part of the written product has different influences on the internal and external components. This characteristic added an element of recursiveness to the process. Macaro (2003, p. 222) explained that this recursiveness may be observed to operate through the following six functions:

1. Eliciting the task requirements
2. Setting communicative goals when matching the task requirements to the linguistic knowledge present in the LTM
3. Evaluating the retrieved language as L1/L2 equivalents
4. Monitoring, checking or resorting to other means to facilitate the production of language before writing
5. Written formulation
6. Monitoring whilst writing (Macaro, 2003, p. 222)

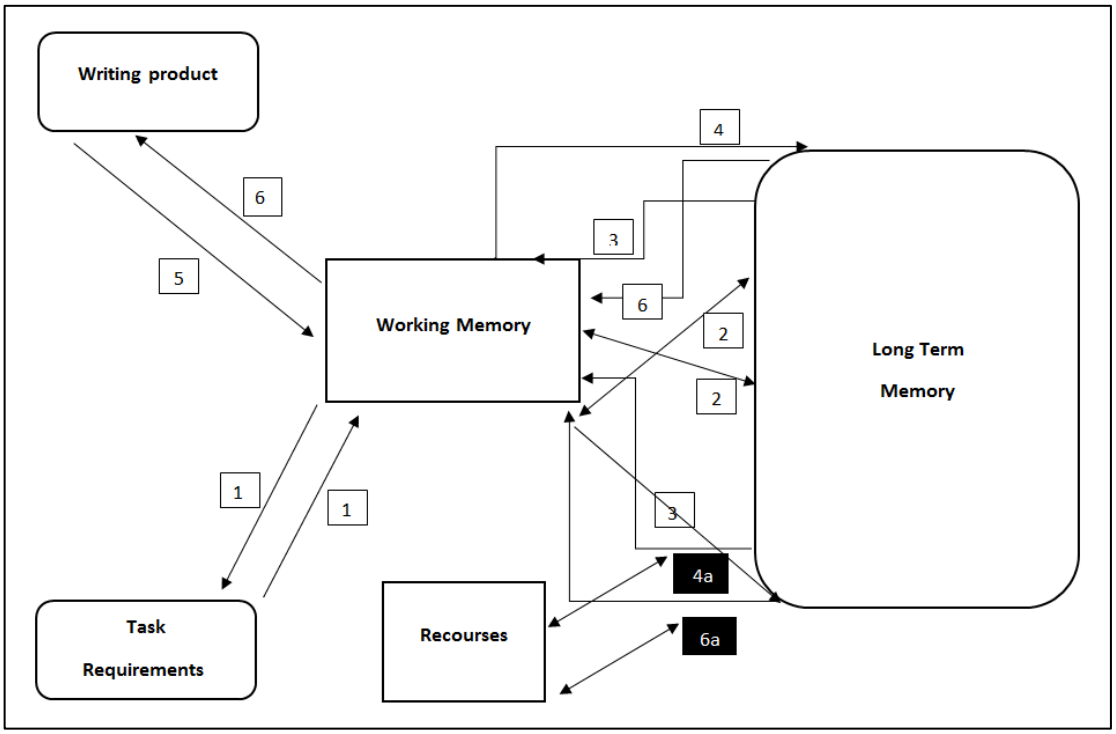

Figure 2.5. Macaro's (2003) L2 Writing Model.

Despite Macaro's (2003) attempt to provide a model for L2 writing, it is clear that his model is based on Flower and Hayes' (1980) L1 writing model. However, it is not as comprehensive as Flower and Hayes' model as it does not depict the different sub-processes of writing or their components (see Section 2.4.2).

In summary, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, L2 writing research is heavily influenced by the models of L1 writing. According to Cumming (1998), "we are far from seeing models that adequately explain learning to write in a second language" (p. 68). Although Kroll (2003) recognised the effort made by several researchers to form a theoretical framework of L2 writing, a comprehensive model of L2 writing has yet to be developed. In the following section and in light of Flower and Hayes' (1981) writing model, I discuss the different stages of L2 writing that the participants in this research have been observed to go through.

2.6 The L2 writing processes

After the shift in focus from product to process, and from a linear to a recursive process, as put forward by Flower and Hayes (1981), educators of L2 writing displayed greater interest in the processes and sub-processes of L2 writing. This will be demonstrated in the next section.

2.6.1 Pre-writing

Pre-writing is usually the first step of the writing process; it involves planning (brainstorming), which consists of local planning and global planning (Ellis, 2005). In this stage, thoughts, goals and plans are set, and drafting typically follows. According to Yu-wen (2007), pre-writing involves "brainstorming, idea mapping, outlining, cubing, listing, free-writing, looping, track switching, classic invention and the reporter's formula" (p. 12).

2.6.2 Writing

Drafting is the stage in which thoughts and plans are converted to visible and readable signs and symbols representing such thoughts. Harris (1993) stated that writing is an act of translating plans and ideas through a temporary text. In this process, writers retrieve ideas and plans of what to write next from what has been written in the pre-writing stage. They may also revise, evaluate and edit what has been written. The same processes may occur in an interactive and recursive pattern, as such processes overlap with one another (Plakans, 2008).

2.6.3 Post-writing

This review phase is the last stage of the writing process. It is concerned with making amendments to the written product. According to Cabrejas (2008), "revision refers to any change that the writer makes on a written page" (p. 110). These changes can be minor, such as spelling and punctuation, or major, thus affecting the content of the text (Cabrejas, 2008). Cabrejas insisted on the reclusiveness of revision as a part of the writing process. Flower and Hayes (1981) stated that throughout the act of revision, writers may revise, evaluate and edit their writing at any given time, a process that leads to new planning.

It is necessary to point out that previous studies and this one have found L2 writers use several different strategies as a means to facilitate their L2 writing. In the following sections, I provide a description and classification of these strategies.

2.7 Writing strategies

2.7.1 Definitions and characteristics of writing strategies

Rubin (1981) defines as strategies as "operations or steps used by a learner to facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information" (Rubin, 1981, p. 5). According to Cohen (2011), language learning strategies are the "thoughts and actions, consciously chosen

and operationalized by language learners, to assist them in carrying out a multiplicity of tasks from the very outset of learning to the most advanced levels of target language performance". Cohen (2011) insisted that the term "conscious" is very important during the choice of the learning processes, as it implies that the writer is aware of the strategies used. He also stressed that "if the behaviour is so unconscious that the learners are not able to identify any strategies associated with it, then the behaviour would simply be referred to as a process, not a strategy" (p. 11). In fact, this is what makes a strategy unique. The characteristic of problem solving was present in the definition of writing strategy proposed by Cornaire and Raymond (1994) (as cited in Beare, 2000). They refer to it as a series of plans of action or a conscious involvement to deal with a task, with the objective of solving a problem or achieving a goal. The notion of strategy in the literature is controversial because educators could not reach an agreement on a uniform definition (Ellis, 2008).

In summary, the uniqueness of a strategy is evident in the several distinctive features derived from the discussed definitions, such as involving problem solving, being consciously chosen and being goal oriented. The disagreement on a unified definition for it was observed to affect the establishment of a taxonomy, thus forming a barrier to investigating writing strategies (Elshawish, 2014). In the current research, strategy refers to all the actions, thoughts and practices utilised by writers to produce a text. These strategies are used deliberately to address any difficulties that may emerge in the writing task.

2.7.2 Classification of writing strategies

As there are a number of different definitions of writing strategies (see Section 2.7.1), educators (e.g. Tarone, 1977; O'Malley & Chamot, 1987, 1990; Oxford, 1990) have classified them into different categories. These classifications cover different skills of learning a language, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Accordingly, as the current research is concerned with writing, the focus will be on the classifications of writing strategies rather than learning strategies.

Many classifications of writing strategies were introduced in the field, such as those by Zamel (1983), Raimes (1987), Cumming (1987, 1990), Friedlander, (1990), Whalen (1993), Whalen and Menard (1995), Leki (1995) and Sasaki and Hirose (1996). One of the most recognised classifications was proposed by Perl (1979). This taxonomy was based on a study she conducted on five unskilled native English students at a college. She used TAPs, interviews and written products to collect data from her participants. The entire TAP sessions and interviews were audiotaped in an attempt to understand the way in which the writing process was formed. According to this study, the distinct behaviour of each of the writers was categorised, and the TAPs were coded accordingly. Below is an extract of Perl's (1979) taxonomy of writing strategies.

Table 2.1

Perl's (1979) Taxonomy of Writing Strategies (Perl, 1979, pp. 320-321)

Strategy	**Code**	**Definition**
(1) General planning	[PL]	Organising one's thoughts for writing, discussing how one will proceed.
(2) Local planning	[PLL]	Talking out what idea will come next.
(3) Global planning	[PLG]	Discussing changes in drafts.
(4) Commenting	[C]	Sighing, making a comment or judgment on the topic.

Strategy	Code	Definition
(5) Interpreting	[I]	Rehearsing the topic to get a "handle" on it.
(6) Assessing	[A(+); A(-)]	Making a judgement about one's writing; may be positive or negative.
(7) Questioning	[Q]	Asking a question.
(8) Talking leading to writing	[T--W]	Voicing ideas on the topic, tentatively finding one's way, but not necessarily being committed to or using all one is saying.
(9) Talking and writing at the same time	[TW]	Composing aloud in such a way that what one is saying is actually being written at the same time.
(10) Repeating	[re]	Repeating written or unwritten phrases a number of times
(11) Reading related to the topic	[RD]	(a) Reading the directions
	[RQ]	(b) Reading the question
	[RS]	(c) Reading the statement
(12) Reading related to one's own written products	[Ra]	(a) Reading one sentence or a few words
	[Ra-b]	(b) Reading a number of sentences together
	[Rwi]	(c) Reading the entire draft through
(13) Writing silently	[W]	(13) Writing silently
(14) Writing aloud	[TW]	(14) Writing aloud
(15) Editing	[E]	
	[Eadd]	(a) Adding syntactic markers, words, phrases or clauses
	[Edel]	(b) Deleting syntactic markers, words, phrases or clauses
	[Egr]	(c) Indicating concern for a grammatical rule
	[Epunc]	(d) Adding, deleting or considering the use of punctuation
	[Esp]	(e) Considering or changing spelling
	[Ess]	(f) Changing the sentence structure through embedding, coordination or subordination
	[Ewc]	(g) Indicating concern for appropriate vocabulary (word choice)
	[Evc]	(h) Considering or changing the verb form
(16) Periods of silence	[s]	

Perl's study proved the recursive nature of writing. This pattern of recursiveness differs from one writer to another and from one component of writing to another. According to Perl's research, writers use the following three processes: re-reading what has been written to ensure that the texts represent what is meant, focusing on certain main words when facing any difficulties in composing the text and "felt sense," which writers appear to use in planning, drafting and revising.

Although this coding scheme is valuable in shedding light on writing strategies, one could argue that it includes behavioural activities, such as planning and engaging in periods of silence (strategic and non-strategic). Another point to argue about is the fact that writing is naturally performed silently; therefore, the last strategy, which involves engaging in periods of silence, could be unjustifiable (Elshawish, 2014). Finally, the organisation is not logical, as revising and editing are introduced apart from each other (Alhaysony, 2008). This study was similar to the current research in that the context was also aimed at the college level, and both studies utilised TAPs, interviews and analyses of written products.

Another classification of writing strategies was introduced by Arndt (1987). He investigated the writing strategies of six Chinese graduate students. Two essays and their TAPs, one in Chinese and one in English, were analysed, and Perl's (1979) coding scheme was used to code the TAPs. The data analysis revealed some interesting findings. The table below shows the main strategies found in Arndt's study.

Table 2.2

Arndt's (1987) Taxonomy of Writing Strategies (Arndt, 1987)

Strategy	**Explanation**
Planning	Finding a focus, deciding what to write about
Global Planning	Deciding how to organize the text as a whole
Rehearsing	Trying out ideas and the language in which to express them
Repeating	Of key words and phrases - an activity which often seemed to provide impetus to continue composing
Re-reading	Of what had already been written down
Questioning	As a means of classifying ideas, or evaluating what had been written
Revising	Making changes to the written text in order to clarify meaning
Editing	Making changes to the written text in order to correct the syntax or spelling

Victori (1995) investigated writing knowledge and strategies on the basis of TAP and interview analyses. She identified seven writing strategies. The first is planning, which refers to the strategy in which a writer groups thoughts and ideas so that he/she could decide on what to include in the text. It involves dealing with both the organisation as well as the objective of the written text. The second is monitoring, which involves inspecting the progress of the writing process and identifying the next challenges. The third is evaluating, which involves the process of re-evaluating what has been written. This strategy includes reviewing the goals of the writing, the ideas presented and any amendments to the text. The fourth is resourcing, which refers to the act of consulting any external source, such as a dictionary, to look up the meaning of a word or to check grammar or spelling. The fifth is repeating, which means repeating verbal words when revising or panning the writing. The sixth is reduction, which refers to coping with certain challenges in writing and deciding

whether to omit or paraphrase for the purpose of evading the difficulties encountered. The seventh is the use of L1, in which writers switch to L1 to facilitate writing. This strategy can include translating, assessing or generating new plans.

Sasaki (2000) proposed one of the most influential classifications of writing strategies. To examine the writing processes of three different groups of Japanese EFL writers, he assigned four writers to each of the following three groups: expert versus novice group, more expert versus less expert group and novice writers before and after receiving six months of instructions. Several methods were utilised to collect the data, such as written texts, stimulated recall protocols and analytic scores given to the produced texts. Table 2.3 below presented examples of the writing strategies identified by Sasaki (2000).

Table 2.3

Examples of Sasaki's (2000) Taxonomy of Writing Strategies (Sasaki, 2000, pp. 289-291)

Type	**Categories**	**Definition**
Planning	Global planning	Detailed planning of overall organization
	Thematic planning	Less detailed planning of overall organization
	Local planning	Planning what to write next
Retrieving	Plan retrieving	Retrieving the already constructed plan
	Information retrieving	Retrieving appropriate information from long-term memory
Generating ideas	Naturally generated	Generating an idea without any stimulus
	Description generated	Generating an idea related to the previous description
Evaluating	L2 proficiency evaluation	Evaluating one's own L2 proficiency
	Local text evaluation	Evaluating part of the generated text
	General text evaluation	Evaluating the generated text in general

Sasaki's (2000) research is considered one of the most famous studies that contributed to the field of writing strategy because it investigated both written products and processes. However, it was criticised for its small number of participants, which was only 12.

Wong (2005) examined the writing strategies of a group of writers. He utilised TAPs as the main tool for data collection. Wong's analysis showed that his study participants used common writing strategies. These strategies included questioning, re-reading, goal setting, cognitive strategies (e.g. drafting and revising) and affective strategies (e.g. self-assessment).

In the following section, I review previous studies on the use of some of the above mentioned strategies by L2 writers.

2.9 Previous studies on the use of L2 writing strategies

In this section, I shall review the literature on the use of writing strategies by learners with different first languages, namely Arab learners and by Saudi learners.

2.9.1 Previous studies on the use of L2 writing strategies by learners with different first languages

In 1987, Arndt investigated the writing processes of six Chinese graduate students. Similar to the present study, Arndt utilised TAPs as a main instrument and coded them using Perl's (1979) coding scheme. The students were asked to write two essays, one in English and another in Chinese. Data analysis indicated that limited awareness of the task nature was a major challenge in composing in English and also in Chinese. According to Arndt, no significant effect of the language of composing and the students' proficiency was observed on the way the students wrote. Arndt suggested that the students could have "felt less able to try out alternatives and less happy with decisions in L2 than in L1" (p. 265).

Another study focused on the writing process of five high school students in the Thai context (Khongpun, 1992). The students were asked to compose in L1 and L2. Using TAPs as the main instrument to collect the data, Khongpun found that the students did not appear to consider their audience when writing their composition; however, they all had a goal in mind when engaging in composing. The writing of individual students also showed variations, although they used similar writing strategies as a group (e.g. planning, rehearsing and repeating).

In the Turkish context, Akyle and Kamisli (1996) studied the influence of writing instruction on the composed text. TAPs, students' compositions, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with eight students were used to collect the data. The results indicated that apart from revision, a positive effect of L2 composing instruction on L1 composing was found. According to Akyle and Kamisli (1996), the students appeared to have utilised more revision and editing when writing in their L2 than in their L1.

In another study, Victori (1999) used TAPs and interviews to investigate the writing process of two skilled Spanish students and two less-skilled ones. In this study, Victori investigated meta-cognitive knowledge differences and the way these affected writing skills. Data analysis indicated that the attention of the two skilled writers seemed to be focused more on the global aspects of the texts, whereas the less-skilled students were interested in grammar issues, such as the right tenses of verbs and the right prepositions to use. The interview data also revealed that less-skilled students reported that they started writing with plans and ideas. They went on to organise these throughout the composing process or during the revision stage. Nonetheless, in reality, the students did not modify their essays, and these remained the same by the time the students finished writing. On the other hand, skilled writers seemed to organise their writing in terms of ideas, thoughts and a structure. Skilled writers also appeared to revise their text to improve its structure, as well as evaluate the way in which their essay

meets their objectives. Less-skilled writers were found to use reading to assess and check content and grammar features. Victori (1999) stated that in the revision stage, the less-skilled students were more interested in correcting grammar and vocabulary. Regarding audience awareness, Victori reported that some less-skilled students claimed that they attempted to use complex sentences as a means of addressing their audience, whereas the other less-skilled ones did not give any attention to their audience. Skilled students indicated that they changed plans and text structure to meet their audience's need.

2.9.2 Previous studies on L2 writing strategies used by Arab learners

A review of the literature indicates that several studies were conducted in the Arab world to address different aspects of writing. These include studies on error analysis, grammatical structures of the text, as well as studies focussed on semantics and coherence in the text (see, for example, Kharma, 1986, 1985; Al-Juboori, 1984; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997; Doushaq & Al-Makhzoomy, 1989; Halimah, 1991; Alam, 1993; Hasan, 1999; Ghazzoul, 2008). Nonetheless, research investigating the writing processes and strategies that EFL learners utilise whilst engaging in English writing tasks is scarce. This section will focus on reviewing previous studies on EFL writing strategies and the challenges encountered by Arab learners.

One of the earliest studies to examine the writing processes of Arab EFL writers was that of Elkhatib (1984). Two instruments (observations and interviews) were used to collect data from four less-skilled Egyptian students. Throughout the composing session, Elkhatib observed the students and then interviewed them about their writing behaviour. He reported that the rhetorical patterns utilised by the students focused on their visions about composing, the lexical challenges they encountered and the composing process. Moreover, the students did not complete their planning stage, so outlining and brainstorming were not realised.

According to Elkhatib, this may indicate that the students were unaware of such a technique. Finally, he noticed that some of them observed a long period of silence, and only two of them revised their written products, with very minor surface changes.

This study is significant, as it showed some interesting writing challenges (rhetorical and lexical) that writers face, but it could be criticised in several aspects. First, the total number of participants was limited to four individuals, which could raise a question on the representativeness of the data. In the current research, 28 people participated. Second, Elkhatib's study utilised only two instruments to collect data, and these were observations and interviews, whereas the present research used TAPs, analyses of written products, observations and stimulated recalls. Third, the participants in Elkhatib's study were all less skilled, which did not give him the chance to compare their performance with that of skilled writers to check if any differences existed. By comparison, the present research investigated two groups: skilled and less-skilled students. Finally, Elkhatib's study reported some long periods of writers' silence, which could have affected the credibility of the results, as this factor was unaccounted for, and the writers' cognitive activities were not accessed to assess how the produced texts were formulated.

Another study was conducted in the Jordanian context. Abu Shihab (1986) investigated the writing processes and strategies of 20 individuals studying at a high school. Abu Shihab used observations, written product analyses and interviews to collect data. Analysis of the data showed that the students switched to L1 (Arabic) as a strategy to translate to L2, as they experienced difficulties in the level of sentence development. In the interviews, the writers pointed out that their instructors did not teach them how to write; however, Abu Shihab attributed this weakness in writing ability to the fact that both the instructors and the students regarded writing as limited to learning grammar. This perception resulted in a focus on grammar and an ignorance of needing to learn about the writing processes. This study is

partially similar to the current research in terms of context (Arab students). They also have common research instruments, which are written product analyses and interviews. Both research investigated the writing strategies used by EFL writers. However, they are different in that Abu Shihab's study was conducted with high school students, whereas the present study focuses on university students.

Using writing proficiency tests and questionnaires, Halimah (1991) investigated the challenges that Arab students faced when composing in ESP. The study was conducted at three tertiary educational institutes in Kuwait, and a total of 100 participants took part. Halimah requested writing instructors to complete questionnaires about teaching English, in general, and particularly about teaching their students. Halimah's study showed that Arab ESP writers were poor writers. This low standard of composing ability could be attributed to several factors, such as educational, rhetorical, linguistic, procedural and psychological factors.

Kharma (1985) examined the writing challenges faced by Arab EFL writers. Using written products obtained from the participants, Kharma focused on the effect of the use of L1 (Arabic) on the L2 writing (English) of the participants. The results revealed that the challenges encountered by the students during EFL writing could be attributed to the following reasons: lack of English language competence, differences between Arabic and English structures (rhetoric), instructors' tolerance of errors made by the students, scarce opportunities to use English in real communication and lack of motivation. Kharma pointed out that all errors made by the students in L2 could be attributed either totally or partially to the negative transfer of L1.

In a study of 15 students majoring in English at the University of Kuwait, Alam (1993) investigated the use of L1 whilst composing in L2 for translation or thinking purposes. Using stimulated recall interviews and follow-up interviews, Alam found that the students

relied on L1 whenever they encountered a challenge in the pre-writing, writing and revision phases. Alam stated that the majority of the participants thought in L1 throughout the pre-writing phase, and only a few of them utilised both L1 and L2. The majority of the students produced only a short paragraph rather than an essay. According to Alam, the use of L1 throughout all writing stages could be responsible for the students' lack of EFL writing competency. However, he stated that the use of L1 facilitated the continuity of the composing process in English. Alam's (1993) study examined code switching to Arabic whilst engaging in the process of composing in English, as well as the extent to which this could affect writing quality. However, this study was criticised for its limited number of participants, which could raise a question on the generalisability of its findings.

In an attempt to examine the writing proficiency of 100 students in both the English and Arabic languages at the University of Kuwait, Halimah (2001) conducted a comprehensive investigation using expository composing tasks, questionnaires and a 10-point scale tool to assess students' writing; the participants ranged from those who were not able to write to highly skilled writers. The main points that Halimah's study focused on were grammar, spelling, capitalisation, punctuation, organisation and content quality. Data analysis revealed that the students were not good writers in both English and Arabic. This weakness was attributed to their insufficient 'grasp of rhetorical conventions' rather than their limited linguistic competence. Halimah also asserted that in spite of the good command of grammar that the students may display, they encountered rhetorical challenges. He believes that the transfer of L1 rhetoric into L2 writing causes such challenges.

Despite the large number of participants in the aforementioned study, it lacked a source of cognitive information to access the writers' thoughts and activities throughout the process of composing. Furthermore, Halimah distributed the questionnaires to teachers and not students, which could have revealed more useful information about the targeted sample.

In the Moroccan context, El-Mortaji (2001) examined the writing process and strategies of 18 multi-lingual students. All the students were majoring in English at college. Data was collected using TAPs, interviews and questionnaires to examine the extent to which writing competency is affected by Arabic (L1) and English (L3), gender, discourse and the frequency of use of writing strategies. Qualitative and quantitative analyses of data revealed that the most frequently utilised strategy by the students encompassed reading, rehearsing, revising and planning. El-Mortaji stated that the use of these strategies and the text quality varied between skilled and less-skilled students. Less-skilled students conducted more planning than skilled students. Regarding gender differences, El-Mortaji claimed that female writers switched between languages more than their male counterparts. Moreover, both writers switched to Arabic and French whilst engaging in the composing process. The amount of switching varied according to gender, assigned topic and English competency. According to El-Mortaji, code switching did not appear to hinder text production, and only a few students reported encountering some challenges that stemmed from the use of Arabic or French whilst composing in English.

The aforementioned study is similar to the current one in several aspects. Both utilised TAPs, interviews and written text analyses. Both studies were conducted at a university context, both examined in depth the gender and skill level of the students (skilled vs. less skilled) and both proposed a writing model based on the patterns of writing strategy that the students used. However, El-Mortaji's research had a fewer number of participants, which was 18 students.

In another study, El Aswad (2002) investigated the writing processes of 12 students in L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English) at a Libyan university. The data collection instruments included observation, interviews, TAPs, questionnaires, analyses of written products and case studies. Data analysis showed that the majority of the participants had a purpose in mind whilst

composing, and that there was minimal focus on their audience. El Aswad pointed out that every student showed a separate unitary composing style in both languages, with some variations in specific aspects. Another interesting finding was that the students' process of writing as a group showed an apparent variation in terms of planning and organising the content. Regarding the reviewing phase, a difference between the two languages was found. In the revising stage of Arabic, the focus was on content and organisation, whereas in English, grammar, vocabulary and form received the most attention. Furthermore, the use of the editing strategy was significantly used to a greater extent by the participants in their L2 than in their L1. The students showed similar mental planning activities in the two languages. L2 essays appeared to contain more repetitions and L1 use. Moreover, the results showed that the students lacked linguistic knowledge and writing proficiency, which consequently prevented them from mastering the L2. With regard to less-skilled students, El Aswad observed that they used L1 strategies more than the skilled students did in L2 composing. This finding therefore suggests that the students tended to use L1 when writing in L2. The frequency of the use of L1 varied according to L2 proficiency level. This result is in line with the findings derived from current research with regard to the use of L1 in L2 writing in that the usage increased among poor writers and decreased among good writers. In fact, El Aswad (2002) suggested that writing processes and strategies appeared to be universal, as writers of L1 (Arabic) seemed to use the same strategies that native speakers of English use when composing in their L1.

El Aswad's (2002) study is important for several reasons. Firstly, it proposed a writing model based on the strategies used by 12 students, similar to what the current study does .One difference is that the present study involves 28 individuals. Secondly, a wide range of data collection instruments were used in both studies, such as TAPs, observations, interviews, questionnaires, analyses of written products and case studies. However, the current study also

used stimulated recalls. It examined the differences between the two languages (Arabic and English) and included writers with different levels of writing proficiency.

Chaaban (2010) examined the writing processes and strategies utilised by Syrian university students. Eleven individuals from the English language department were invited to join the study, including male and female students. Six instructors of English were also invited to participate. Qualitative instruments, including TAPs, observations, stimulated recalls, and semi-structured interviews, were used to gather data from sophomore and senior students. Data analysis revealed that a total of eight strategies and 28 sub-strategies were utilised by the students throughout the composing process. According to Chaaban, the following three issues seemed to influence the composing behaviour of the students: Their writing proficiency, the discourse mode and the context of composing. The composing abilities of the students were also significantly affected by socio-cultural issues, such as their learning approach, previous learning experiences and the quality of composing instructions and feedback they received throughout the pre-tertiary period. Their teachers pointed out other issues that affected the writing process, such as the large number of students in one class, the unequal level of proficiency of the students and the lack of consistency in assigning instructors given that each class had a different instructor. All these factors were found to affect the pedagogical process. In summary, Chaaban indicated that the use of L1 played an influential role in the production of L2 text. She also observed a lack of motivation and interest among students to practice writing, which was as a result of the instruction they had received.

In a more recent study, Elshawish (2014) investigated the writing processes and strategies used by Libyan university students majoring in English. A qualitative approach, which consisted of TAPs, observations and semi-structured interviews, was used to collect the data. Two types of writers were examined: good writers (five students) and poor ones (six

students). Three experienced instructors of English writing were also invited to an interview. Data analysis showed that the writers used various strategies and sub-strategies. However, the frequency and quality of the used strategies seemed to vary between the two groups. Another interesting variation observed in the composing process was that recursiveness was relative to composing competency and proficiency in L2. Furthermore, poor writers faced challenges during the TAPs, as coping with the act of writing and verbalising thoughts simultaneously was difficult for them. This issue seemed to affect the use, type and frequency of strategies used by poor writers. Analysis of the interviews of both students and instructors revealed that the development of the students' composing was affected by several factors associated with their language proficiency level and previous learning experiences. Proficiency level seemed to affect composing behaviour. This was evident mainly in the planning, scanning and use of L1 strategies. The motivation of the two groups indicated an obvious variation: good writers were found to be more motivated to improve their composing skills than poor writers were. This positive attitude of such writers towards learning to write was attributed to the previous education they received at the pre-tertiary and tertiary levels, as well as their aspiration to secure a good job in the future. On the other hand, poor writers were found to be less motivated, as they did not realise the value of writing in real life. Elshawish emphasised that previous learning at the pre-tertiary stages affected the students' composing skills. Skilled writers who read frequently appeared to encounter less challenges in presenting their thoughts than less-skilled ones. In fact, the most significant finding of Elshawish's work was that in the study of the writing process and the final written product, factors, such as L2 proficiency, motivation and past learning experiences must be considered, as these have a major effect on L2 composing. Based on the observation of the students' writing processes and strategies, Elshawish's (2014) study proposed a tentative writing process model which considered the differences in the use of strategies between the two groups.

The importance of the aforementioned study is that it is similar to the current research, in that it uses several instruments to collect the data, such as TAPs, observations and semi-structured interviews. Another important feature which is also similar to the current research is that, Elshawish's study proposed a tentative writing model based on the strategies used by the participants. It also examined and compared the writing processes of two groups (skilled vs. less-skilled writers), which is similar to what was carried out in this current research. However, Elshawish's study was criticised because it used a small number of participants (eleven students and three teachers). Such a limited number could raise concerns about the reliability and representability of its findings. The way in which Elshawish selected his study participants was not representative of all the students in the department because he invited only senior students to join, whereas he excluded freshman, sophomore and junior students. Thus, the results of his research cannot be generalised and made applicable to the entire department or to the Libyan context.

2.9.3 Previous studies on L2 writing strategies used by Saudi learners

From the review of the literature on Saudi students' writing processes and strategies, I noticed the scarcity of research conducted. In fact, the majority of writing studies in Saudi settings are concerned with the analysis of final products, grammar or error analysis. Some studies on English writing processes and strategies (Al-Semari, 1993; Aljamhoor, 1996; Alnofal, 2003; Alhaysony, 2008; Alharthi, 2012) will be discussed and compared with the current research where appropriate. They are relevant to the present study in respect of either their context, the languages investigated, which are L1 Arabic and L2 English, and an identical focus on the writing processes and strategies. A review of these studies shows their drawbacks, such as their use of a non-Saudi context, examining only a small number of strategies, the small number of participants involved or other issues in the manner in which

the studies were conducted, which could have had an adverse effect on their reliability. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, the present study is the first one in the Saudi context that attempts to compare the writing processes and strategies of male and female students of the English department at the university level.

One of the first studies in the Saudi context was conducted by Al-Semari (1993), who examined the revision strategies of eight advanced Saudi students writing in L1 (Arabic) and in L2 (English). The students were studying at Michigan State University. Using TAPs, Al-Semari asked the students to write two argumentative essays and to verbalise their thoughts whilst engaging in the processes of composing and revising. One of the essays was in Arabic, whereas the other essay was in English. Faigley and Witte's (1981) revision taxonomy was utilised to classify the revising strategies utilised. Analysis of the data showed some differences in the use of revision strategies in L1 and L2 writing between the two groups. In English writing, the students appeared to make more formal, grammatical and mechanical changes, whereas in Arabic writing, they made a greater number of deletions and greater organisation. According to Al-Semari, the similarities in the use of the revising strategy between writers were observed in both English and Arabic drafts. The students utilised the same kind of revision and had the same purpose of revision whilst producing the drafts. The students also made surface revisions instead of deep ones without changing the meaning. Expansion was done more frequently than deletion. Revision also enriched the final draft compared with the initial drafts. Furthermore, the students utilised more revising strategies in L2 than in L1 composing, and advanced students engaged in more revising activities than their intermediate peers. This finding resonates with that of a study on L1 English conducted by Stallard (1974). In line with Sommers' finding (1980), advanced students were also found to use revision strategies that were different from those used by their intermediate peers (e.g. substitution and addition) when composing in L1 or L2. Al-Semari's study revealed the

recursive nature of the revision process in both L1 and L2 writing. Al-Semari's study can be very beneficial to the field of writing in the Saudi context. It presented a very detailed explanation of the use of revising in L1 and L2, and also compared it among students of different levels of proficiency. However, the study could be criticised for its complete reliance on TAPs as the only instrument used to collect the data, the limited number of participants involved (eight students) and the context within which the study was conducted, which was a university in the United States. These limitations could mean that the students received a different instruction from those studying at Saudi universities. Thus, the results may not be applicable to Saudi students in Saudi Arabia.

In a longitudinal study, Aljamhoor (1896) examined the writing problems of two Saudi students in both L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English) at a university in the United States. He used stimulated recalls and questionnaires to collect the data and to examine the composing challenges encountered by the students and the extent to which instruction on writing strategies could affect writing. Aljamhoor asked the students to produce one essay in Arabic and another one in English at the beginning of the semester. At the end of semester, they were asked to reproduce the same essays. The results showed that the essays produced before the instruction appeared to have had many problems. These problems were predominantly organisational, rhetorical and linguistic challenges. The participants were also uninterested in engaging in any pre-writing strategies. For example, no planning was used neither in L1 nor L2 before the students received their English as a second language instruction (ESL) instruction. However, after instruction, the students seemed to utilise some planning, and they appeared to write and stop in order to think and generate ideas, determine the best vocabulary to use and read what has been written. Aljamhoor stated that revision was observed to take place throughout the drafting stage. Another interesting finding was that the students used the same composing strategies in both languages. The students also pointed out that planning and

revision throughout composing enriched their process of writing with new thoughts and ideas. Finally, Aljamhoor believed that the improper use of the right composing process could be a consequence of the inadequate teaching of writing in the students' home country.

Although many important aspects of the effect of strategy instruction on writing were presented in the aforementioned study, one could argue about several issues. Firstly, the main focus of the study was the effect of instruction, whilst writing strategies were neglected. Secondly, the very limited number of students involved (two students) could have affected the reliability and representability of the findings. Thirdly, the study did not use verbal reports whilst composing, which may have served as an invaluable source of cognitive access to the participants' thoughts. For these previous reasons, my research used the TAPs, together with all the instruments used in Aljamhoor's study, and examined the most common strategies that students utilised when writing in L2.

In another study, the writing processes of six Saudi students in L1 Arabic and L2 English at a university in the United States were investigated by Alnofal (2003). Stimulated recall interviews and an online questionnaire were utilised to collect the data. The participants were requested to write two descriptive essays in English and in Arabic. During the stimulated recall interviews, the students were asked about the writing processes they utilised. They were trained to write in L2 more than in L1. Additionally, Alnofal observed some similarities in both languages in terms of the planning, formulating and reviewing strategies. Formulating strategies were more repeatedly utilised in L1 than in L2. A moderate to strong relationship was also noted between the strategies of planning, reviewing and formulating in L1 and L2, whereas no significant link between the training received in both L1 and L2 was found. Finally, the students indicated that the training they received in L2 affected their writing in L1, which suggests that the L2 composing process could be transferred to the L1 setting for organisation and facilitation reasons.

The significance of Alnofal's study stems from the fact that it comprehensively examines writing strategies; however, it may be criticised because of its small number of participants (six students) and the context of the study (the United States), which may have affected the instruction that the writers received. The study included female writers, but they and their male peers were treated as one group.

Alhaysony (2008) examined the writing processes and strategies of third-year female students majoring in English at a university in the northern region of Saudi Arabia. The similarities in the use of writing processes between L1 Arabic and L2 English were investigated, and the writing strategies of skilled and unskilled writers were explored as well. The instruments used in Alhaysony's study included TAPs, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The findings showed that the composing processes that the students utilised were recursive in nature. Many similarities in the use of the composing strategies were seen in both L1 and L2 writing. However, several differences were also observed, such as generating mental plans of ideas and content. According to Alhaysony, the students used more writing strategies in L2 than in L1. Regarding the use of writing strategies, skilled and unskilled students used the same types of strategies, but a difference in the frequency of the use of these strategies was observed. Questionnaire analysis revealed that the claim made by skilled writers that they used more writing strategies in both L1 and L2 was inaccurate. In fact, the TAP data indicated that poor writers, compared with their skilled peers, were found to use writing strategies in both languages more frequently. Moreover, poor writers appeared to switch to L1 when composing in L2 for planning, generating ideas and translating purposes. Alhaysony proposed a tentative writing model derived from the use of writing processes and strategies of her students.

Alhaysony's (2008) study is significant in the field of writing strategies of Arabs, in general, and Saudis, in particular. In fact, it is similar to the current research in several

aspects. Firstly, both used TAPs and semi-structured interviews to approach the data. However, the present study also used stimulated recalls, whereas Alhaysony used a questionnaire. Secondly, both were conducted in the Saudi context and with university students. However, my research consisted of both male and female writers, whereas Alhaysony's study was limited to female writers only, which could be a drawback. Thirdly, both studies investigated the writing strategies of skilled and unskilled writers. Fourthly, both proposed a tentative writing model. For these reasons, the current research findings may be compared with those of Alhaysony.

In another study, Alharthi (2012) examined the writing processes and strategies of 11 senior Saudi students at the English language department of King Abdul-Aziz University by using written samples, TAPs and a writing strategy questionnaire to identify and analyse the composing processes of the students. He also investigated the causes of poor performance of less-skilled writers. Alharthi examined the way in which skilled and less-skilled writers composed in L2, and he categorised the differences in the use of composing strategies between the two groups. Data analysis revealed that the students experienced sentential and inter-sentential challenges. Alharthi asserted that the students were aware of the composing strategies, as they appeared to plan, translate and edit their compositions. Additionally, questionnaire data indicated that the students did not report their actual behaviours. Although meta-cognitive, cognitive and affective strategies were pre-dominantly utilised by both groups, only skilled students utilised the planning strategy to plan their composition either globally or locally. Finally, both groups were found to engage in the cognitive process.

Alharthi's study is important because it investigated the writing strategies of Saudi university students, which is similar to the current study. In fact, his study is similar to the present one in several aspects. Firstly, both were conducted at a Saudi university. Secondly, they both used written samples and TAPs as the data collection instruments. However, they

differed in the use of stimulated recalls in the current study and a questionnaire in Alharthi's study. Thirdly, both studies investigated L2 writing processes. Fourthly, Alharthi's study was limited to male students, whereas the current research studied the writing processes of both male and female students separately and then compared them. Fifthly, Alharthi's study relied on GPA records to classify skilled and less-skilled students, whereas the present research categorised students on the basis of a proficiency test distributed to them. The criticism on Alharthi's study was that it lacked interviews with the participants, and that it did not involve female students, which could have affected the generalisability and representability of their findings. Arguably, the use of GPA does not necessarily reflect also the accurate writing proficiency level of the students. Finally, the number of participants was limited (11 students). For all of the aforementioned reasons, the present research sought to use TAPs, analyses of written samples and stimulated recalls. In terms of gender, the current study involved both male and female students (28) to compare and correlate the use of strategies and the challenges encountered. A writing proficiency test, not the GPA, was used to classify the students according to their performance. In Chapter 5, the findings of Alharthi's study are compared with those of the current research, as applicable.

It is important to point out that the use of L1 has been found to play a significant role when writing in L2 among the participants in this research. In the following section, I review the literature on the influence of L1 on L2 writing and point out its relevance to this study.

2.10 Previous studies on the influence of L1 on L2 writing

Writing in L1 is believed to be a complex process that requires several abilities, such as meta-cognitive and linguistic knowledge. However, writing in L2 is even more complicated, as the required skills may not be acquirable, suggesting that the required knowledge might be absent. According to Shoonen et al. (2003), the knowledge of L2 may

not be “as rapid and automatic” as that of L1 (p. 166). One of the most common strategies that L2 writers use when they face any difficulties stemming from the lack of L2 competency is switching to their L1 (Cumming, 1990). In fact, this strategy was the most commonly used one by the participants of the current study. The literature indicates the negative correlation between L2 competency and the use of L1 in an L2 context. Moreover, numerous scholars (e.g. Arndt, 1987; Cumming, 1990; Raimes, 1987; Sasaki, 2000; Wang & Wen, 2002; Zamel, 1983) indicated that L2 writers are likely to resort to their L1 when engaged in L2 composing.

Wang and Wen (2002) used TAPs to examine the use of L1 in L2 writing among 16 Chinese EFL writers. Analysis of the TAPs revealed that the more skilled writers switched to L1 significantly less than the less-skilled writers. This finding is in line with that of the current research, as it suggests that L1 usage decreases as one’s L2 competency increases. Wang and Wen stated that the writers “were more likely to rely on L1 when they were managing their writing processes, generating and organizing ideas, but more likely to rely on L2 when undertaking task-examining and text-generating activities” (p. 225). Wang and Wen also indicated that skilled writers tended to switch to L1 for strategic reasons, such as generating plans and checking ideas, whilst less-skilled writers switched to L1 for translation purposes. Woodall (2002) pointed out that “more difficult tasks increased the duration of L1 use in L2 writing” (p. 7), and the use of L1 decreased as one’s proficiency in L2 increased.

Another study on the use of L1 in the L2 writing process was conducted by Choei and Lee (2006), who used TAPs and retrospective interviews with 10 Korean college students. On the basis of their holistic scores on four aspects of writing, namely, content, organisation, language use and fluency, the students were grouped into two groups (skilled vs. less skilled). The frequency of the use of both English and Korean was calculated through the number of words in each language. The data revealed that the majority of the students utilised a considerable amount of L1 when engaging in the L2 writing process. Less-skilled writers used

L1 more than their skilled peers did. In fact, they used L1 for purposes related to translating, vocabulary and structure. On the other hand, skilled students utilised L1 mainly for meta-comments and generating plans. In summary, the work of Choei and Lee (2006) is similar to the present study in that both were conducted in the university context and TAPs were utilised. However, the current research also made use of stimulated recalls.

Another study on L1 use in L2 writing was conducted by Van Weijen, Van Den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Sanders (2009) with 20 individuals who were asked to write four essays in Dutch (L1) and another four essays in English (L2). Analysis of the TAP data revealed that all writers switched to L1 whilst engaging in L2 at a certain level. Additionally, their competence was reflected in the quality of their L2 composition. Findings revealed a negative correlation between the participants' general writing proficiency and L1 use when writing in L2, while a positive correlation was obtained between general writing proficiency and L2 use during L2 composing sessions.

To sum up, the findings of the previous research reviewed above indicate that the use of L1 seems to be negatively correlated with L2 writing proficiency, and that it was used by less-skilled writers more than by their skilled peers. The former group used their L1 mainly for translation purposes, while the latter group used it to set goals and generate plans. These observations are consistent with the results obtained in this research, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, a brief summary of the process of writing, several definitions of it and the shift in focus from product to process were presented. Some key writing models and theories of L1 writing, along with their strengths and limitations, were also discussed. This literature review emphasised the considerable efforts made to propose a theory or model of L2

writing. Categorisations of the writing processes and strategies of L2 writing, stages of L2 writing and the definitions of each strategy were also presented. Then, relevant previous studies on the influence of L1 writing on L2 writing and the use of writing strategies by EFL writers in Saudi Arabia, other Arab countries and in various international settings were reviewed. The main findings of such studies were discussed and compared, and their strengths and limitations were presented. In the following chapter, I will review the literature on contrastive rhetoric, error analysis and the differences between English and Arabic grammatical structures. Relevant studies on the linguistic errors made by Arab EFL writers will also be explored.

Chapter 3: Contrastive Rhetoric

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the factors affecting the writing of Arab EFL learners. These factors will include linguistic, cultural and educational factors. The chapter also describes the contrastive rhetoric of the English and Arabic language and the differences between them and also addresses the topics of contrastive analysis and error analysis. Thereafter, the chapter goes on to examine critically the grammatical differences between English and Arabic and scrutinises previous studies by focussing on the linguistic errors made by EFL writers in Saudi Arabia and other Arab and international settings.

3.2 Factors affecting the writing of Arab EFL Learners

Writing is considered an essential skill for EFL university students in Saudi Arabia, especially those majoring in English. This is because they need to take notes, write essays and communicate with their professors in English. Despite the fact that most students learn English for nine years in school, a good number of them face several different challenges when composing in English. Therefore, one of the aims of this section is to provide a review of the factors affecting the writing of Arab EFL Learners, and to explore the major problematic areas that L2 writers encounter.

Teaching L2 writing in the Arab world still employs the writing product approach and neglects the writing process. Therefore, EFL writing presents a key challenge for Arab learners. Most of the studies conducted in the Arab world have focused on writing as a final product whereas few studies have viewed writing as a process. In fact, the majority of previous studies were limited to either the use of L1 in L2 writing or attributed the various areas of weakness in writing to linguistic factors only (e.g. Alam, 1992; Halimah, 1993; El-

Mortaji, 2001). However, there are other elements affecting Arab EFL writing such as motivation, cultural factors and educational factors. The next section will address these factors in detail.

3.2.1 Motivation

The field of L2 motivation was first introduced by two Canadian psychologists, Gardner and Lambert in the late 1950s. Since then many educators have emphasised the crucial role that motivation plays in SLA, and several studies have gone on to present it as a major factor in learning L2 such as Corder (1967) Rubin (1975) Gardner (1985) and (2001), Cohen and Dörnyei (2001a), Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), Woolfolk (1993) and Ushioda (2008). According to Dörnyei (2001a), "99 per cent of language learners who really want to learn a foreign language (i.e. who are really motivated) will be able to master a reasonable working knowledge of it as a minimum, regardless of their language aptitude" (p. 2). Dörnyei (1998) defined motivation as "process whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action, or until the planned outcome has been reached" (p. 118). Another definition was also proposed by Ushioda (2008) who defined it as "what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, and to persist in action" (p. 19).

Ryan and Deci (2000) divide motivation into two types. The first one is "intrinsic motivation" which refers to learning for pleasure and enjoyment such as travelling or making new friends. The other type is "extrinsic motivation" which refers to learning an L2 for an external reason such as to receive a reward or to avoid punishment. To shed light on the effect of motivation on writing, the following section reviews a few studies that have examined the role of motivation in L2 writing.

Lipstein and Renninger (2007) examined the conceptual competence of students and their interest in writing, their strategies and their goals. They also observed a direct link between the level of interest the students displayed and the level of effort the students dedicated to their work. It was also noted that the students' writing interest, their preferences and the feedback they received on their writing were factors that enhanced the efficacy of their writing. In this study, a questionnaire was distributed to 179 students and interviews were carried out with 72 of them. Data analysis indicated that the students' interest in writing seemed to be affected by several factors such as their past experience in text production, peer discussion, assignment performance, advice received and the rigour of instruction received from teachers. Further, students who were interested in learning writing were found to be effective writers.

Another study was conducted by Cumming, Kim and Eouanzoui (2007) to examine the extent to which motivation could play a role in writing. The sample consisted of 42 ESL students aiming to enrol at a university in the United States. Cumming interviewed those participants about their English writing improvement, and he stated that they were motivated to improve their writing ability. This interest in improvement was mainly focused on English grammar, vocabulary, and rhetorical knowledge. However, some students expressed a desire to improve their writing processes and strategies.

Using a case study approach, including interviews and TAPs, Victori (1999) examined the differences in beliefs and metacognitive knowledge of writing in EFL writing skills. The sample consisted of four EFL university students, namely two skilled and two less skilled writers. Findings demonstrated that less skilled writers admitted that their low proficiency level in writing was due to a lack of commitment. Victori also observed that this poor quality of writing stemmed from a lack of motivation in practicing writing tasks.

Chaaban's (2010) research examined the writing processes and factors that affected the writing of Syrian sophomore and senior university students (See section 2.9.2 in Chapter 2). She concluded that motivation was one of the factors that seemed to significantly influence her students' writing processes. She added that her participants were extrinsically motivated to achieve higher grades.

In another recent study, Elshawish (2014) (discussed in Section 2.9.2 in Chapter 2) examined the writing process and strategies of two groups of senior EFL students (good as opposed to poor) at a university in Libya. The analysis of TAPs, observations and semi-structured interviews revealed a significant variation in motivation between good and poor writers. The former were interested and eager to practice and improve their writing skills. This ambition was driven by extrinsic goals such as securing a job in the future. The latter group appeared to be less motivated as they did not appreciate the importance of improving their writing skill.

A more recent empirical research was conducted by Aljasir (2016) to investigate the individual differences among Saudi EFL learners at a public university in Saudi Arabia. Aljasir collected her data by distributing three self-developed questionnaires to 334 students, and conducting interviews with 20 students. Several factors were found to correlate with the students' attitude to learning either positively or negatively. Of particular relevance to this study was that a statistically significant difference in external regulation scores was observed for students at varying English proficiency levels. More specifically, Aljasir reported that the low proficiency group recorded the lowest motivation score, while the high proficiency group recorded the highest score. Further, a moderate positive correlation was found between the students' motivation scores and their English module scores. Aljasir's findings about the role of motivation provide evidence attesting to the crucial role this affective factor plays in EFL learning among Saudi university students.

3.2.2 Cultural factors

Researchers have been interested in investigating non-linguistic factors affecting the writing of Arab EFL learners such as cultural factors. One of the earliest studies was carried out by Ostler (1987) who investigated 21 essays produced by Saudi students and compared them to other essays written by native speakers of English. The purpose of Ostler's study was to explore the reasons behind the notion of what was deemed "foreign sounding" that was observed in the writing of Saudi students regardless of their mastery of L2 grammar. Data analysis showed that the essays produced by Saudi students mostly started with universal statements and subordination. They were also found to include a large number of coordinated sentences. Ostler attributed this tendency of tending to be "foreign sounding" of Saudi students' writing to cultural and religious factors. Moreover, Ostler argued that Arabic is heavily influenced by the language of the Holy Quran; hence, he surmised that the students transferred those features to L2 writing. According to Shen (1989), the process of learning to write is not "an isolated classroom activity, but a social and cultural experience" (p. 460). She presented her experience with writing identity when it clashed with her culture being Chinese. Consequently, she used the first person plural pronoun *we* to refer to herself, whereas her professor encouraged her to use the first person singular pronoun *I* to enable her to express her own opinions and thoughts. Shen's experience provides strong evidence that culture could affect learning to write in EFL. Several educators (e.g. Brown, 1988; Kaplan, 1986; Parker, 1988; Shen, 1989; Soter, 1988) have shown a desire to address the cultural differences between different languages as possible non-linguistic sources of challenge when writing in English.

In the Jordanian context, Doushaq (1983) conducted a case study with EFL university students. He asked his participants to write a letter in English and in Arabic. Data analysis revealed that substantial cultural interference of Arabic in the students' English letters.

Doushaq attributed the participants' failure to produce a well written letter in English to their unfamiliarity with the fact that the English letter style was totally different from the one Arabic. He also argued that the negative transfer of their culture played a significant role as a source of challenge in the students' writing.

Another empirical research was conducted by Soter (1988) to examine the narrative writing of grade six Arab students. He concluded that a significant number of conjunctions and coordinate phrases were used in the written composition of his participants. This result mirrors with Kaplan's (1966) findings, which attributed the high use of conjunctions and coordinates to the cultural differences between English and Arabic. To conclude, Arab learners of EFL need to be aware of the cultural factors affecting their English writing and the extent to which they could play a role in the writing process.

3.2.3 Educational factors

English language teaching in Saudi Arabia started in the early 1930s (see Section 1.3 in chapter 1). The educational policy states that students should start their compulsory English courses at the fourth grade (when they are nine years old), and continue studying English until they finish high school (when they are seventeen years old). Students attend two classes a week when they are at the fourth, fifth and sixth grades. Then, from grade seven onwards until they finish high school, they have to attend four classes a week (Education Policy in KSA, 2006).

It is important to highlight that the grading scheme in Saudi Arabia used to be very flexible. If a student passes all courses save for one, she/he will be regarded as passing that course and will be allowed to move to the next grade. However, this policy has recently been amended and now requires the student to pass all courses before being allowed to move on to the next grade. The old lenient system had caused the students to be careless and less

motivated to learn certain subjects, especially those which were regarded as being difficult or boring. Unfortunately, English is usually considered by most students as being one of the most difficult subjects at school. For this reason, students tend to study English only to pass tests (Mahibur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). To address this problem, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Saudi Arabia has launched a promising project, called King Abdullah's program, to develop general education at public schools ("Education Development," 2017). It has been suggested that students should start learning English at an early age and that the educational system needs to have stricter measures .It was also recommended that a more interactive curriculum be adopted and that English teachers be provided with adequate training. It was also put forward that teachers, students and their families should be made aware of the importance of English education in school.

With regard to the teaching of writing in Saudi schools, it is worth noting that not enough time is allocated to provide students with the training they need to learn and employ appropriate strategies and techniques to develop their writing skills (Alhaysony, 2008). Due to the fact that teachers need to emphasise all skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) equally in English classes, most teachers do not give writing the attention it requires, which results in poor final products (Alharthi, 2012).

In addition, most English teachers are concerned with the teaching of vocabulary, grammatical rules and sentence structure. Previous studies have shown that this often results in a poor mastery on the part of the students in acquiring the skills needed to write clear and coherent compositions in English (Al-Hozaimi, 1993; Al-Semari, 1993). According to Aljamhoor (1996, p. 6), "Teaching English writing in Saudi school is based on the belief that the students who learn more vocabulary will be good writers. Therefore, students are required to memorize a great deal of vocabulary in order to speak, read, listen, and write in English."

However, the situation is to some extent better at the tertiary level, especially when it comes to teaching English to English majors. Students usually receive adequate training in language skills, vocabulary and grammar during the first and second years of the programme. They attend 25 hours of English classes a week, four of which are dedicated to the teaching of writing. Each lesson is often designed to teach a specific writing genre (for example, expository, argumentative and descriptive). Teachers, therefore, often begin classes by giving students an overview of the genre to be learned. Then students are given a variety of exercises to practice features such as writing topic sentences, organising ideas, using transitional phrases and formulating conclusions. Unfortunately, students are often asked to do the writing at home and submit it in the next class. This denies teachers the opportunity to observe the actual writing process and identify areas of weakness amongst the students. To conclude, the educational system in the public school arena could be responsible for a great deal of the deficiency in English writing competency among students. This is as a result of several factors. A large number of students in classes, time deficiency, curriculum centred learning. This may be addressed by students being made aware of the importance of English writing skill, and students being motivated to learn English, and teaching instruction objectives being shifted from being product-oriented to process-oriented. The next section will discuss motivation as one of the factors affecting Saudi students writing.

3.2.4 Linguistic factors

The fact that Arabic (a Semitic language) and English (an Indo-European language) belong to two different language categories, plays a role in the lexical interference experienced by Arab learners of English. It is believed that code switching could affect the process of L2 writing, especially at the early stages of learning a new language. It may then decrease as target language competency increases. Many studies have attributed the

challenges that Arab EFL learners face with English writing to the different structures of the English and Arabic languages such as Farfaat (1981), Salamah (1981), Zreg (1983), Labidi (1992), Al-Sindy (1994), El-Aswad (2002) and Azzouz (2013). This includes the negative transfer of aspects of syntactic (grammatical), semantics, phonological, morphological and lexicon.

Jurkovic and Violeta (2010) investigated the effect of pre-existing linguistic competence on the scores achieved in an English for Specific Purposes test. Statistical data analysis showed that the students' achievement test scores were significantly and positively affected by general linguistic competence. Moreover, Lee and Kim (2010) conducted a study to examine both linguistic and educational factors affecting TOEFL scores of students from Finland, Korea and Japan. Data analysis indicated that TOEFL scores were drastically affected by linguistic and educational environments.

In the Arab context, Farhat (1981) examined the extent to which Arabic interfered with the use of English prepositions. Farhat made use of three types of tools to collect data from 26 Arab students at the University of Texas at Austin in relation to the use of prepositions. This included writing, translation and filling in blanks. The statistical analysis of those samples indicated that the role of interference from the students' L1 (Arabic) into L2 was substantial. Moreover, students appeared to be unfamiliar with the fact that English and Arabic prepositions do not correspond to each other, which consequently resulted in the wrong use of prepositions.

Another study was conducted by Fageeh (2003), who examined the beliefs about writing difficulties of 36 Saudi students majoring in English at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. Data analysis indicated that the students believed that writing was the most difficult skill to master when learning the English language. They also reported that the

writing skill demanded a good knowledge of the language in general and particularly of grammar and vocabulary.

In the same context, Al-Sindy (1994) examined syntactic interference errors in the English writing of junior Saudi students at the Department of English Language at a public university in Saudi Arabia. A total of 40 compositions produced by 40 students were collected and analysed to find out whether Arab students used their L1 (Arabic) structure when writing in L2 (English) and whether interlingual or intralingual interference was more frequent than the other. Al-Sindy's (1994) study also aimed to identify the grammatical categories that could be responsible for the interference.

Contrastive and error analyses of students' compositions revealed that the use of L1 structure in L2 writing was a significant cause of the errors. Moreover, errors relevant to the interference of L1 use occurred more frequently than intralingual errors. Furthermore, tense and tense sequence, prepositions, articles copula and auxiliaries were found to be the most challenging grammatical features to the Saudi EFL learners in Al-Sindy's (1994) research.

in order to provide a comprehensive description of the influence of L1 on L2 writing among the participants in this research, in the following section I shed light on the two linguistic disciplines of contrastive analysis and error analysis and point out the differences between them.

3.3 Contrastive analysis (CA) versus error analysis (EA)

According to Lado (1957), the central function of contrastive analysis is to detect the challenging aspects of any L1 in L2 learning by comparing their structures and cultures. Moreover, the more similarities between the two languages, the easier it becomes to learn the target language and vice versa. Although CA suggests that errors committed in L2 are attributed to the interference of L1, EA researches have shown that learners of different L1s

made particular errors in L2. In fact, intralingual and interlingual factors could form major sources of errors (Lennon, 2008). The next section addresses CA, EA and CR along with its critique.

3.3.1 Contrastive analysis

CA emerged as a new linguistic discipline in the middle of the twentieth Century, when Fries (1945) emphasised the important role that CA plays in SLA. According to Fisiak (1981), throughout the Second World War, great efforts and massive funds were invested in the United States to establish effective teaching methods. These efforts resulted in the recognition of CA as an essential method of learning an L2. The term CA defined by Pietro (1968) as "the process of showing how each language interprets universally shared features 33 as unique surface forms"(p. 68). Several educators (e.g. Fries, 1945; Lado, 1957; Benathy, Trager & Waddle, 1966; Di Pietro, 1971; Jakobvits, 1970) defined CA as a description and comparison between one's native language and the target language including the similarities and differences between them. Fries (1945) was the first linguist to highlight the importance of CA in L2 teaching. He stated that: "The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner" (p. 9). According to Fries, the comparison of L1 and L2 could be responsible for the simplicity or difficulty of L2 learning. This assumption was later explained by Lado (1957), and it was known as the CA theory. The purpose of this theory is to compare the language system of L1 to the system of L2 in order to predict the challenges that L2 learners are likely to encounter. Another definition was proposed by Fisiak (1981). He viewed CA as a discipline of linguistics that focuses on comparing and contrasting two linguistic systems of two languages for the purpose of deciding their similarities and differences. This definition was based on the hypothesis that

the challenges in acquiring new language emerge from the interference of the L1 features. CA is capable of predicting those challenges, and curriculum could make use of CA to minimise the effect of such interference. Furthermore, Selinker (1989) added that CA forms the most important means to investigate language transfer by gathering data from participants and analysing them. Nickel (1971), pointed out that "Both teacher and the author require a knowledge of contrastive grammar in order to predict, explain, correct and eliminate errors due to interference between source and target language" (p. 15).

Although CA was regarded as an important aspect of SLA, it was criticised by several educators who raised questions about its theoretical and empirical validity. According to Gradman (1971), CA is not a robust approach since it does not predict all possible errors that the participants may commit. Gradman also pointed out that the challenges in L2 learning should not be limited to interference only as curriculum and poor teaching methodology should be taken into account. Another criticism was proposed by Sciarone (1970), who stated that "the idea that difficulties of a foreign language can be predicted implies the supposition that corresponding structures are easy, and structures that differ, difficult. This supposition should be rejected on the ground of being too simplistic" (p. 117). Furthermore, Dulay and Burt (1974) claimed that a great deal of students' L2 errors is attributed to developmental issues. They concluded that only 4.7 percent of the total number of students' mistakes identified in their empirical study was caused by L1 interference. Further, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) stated that they only observed a minor effect of L1 interference in learning a new language. It is noteworthy here to distinguish an error and a mistake before embarking on error analysis. According to James (1998), a mistake could be identified and corrected by the learner whereas an error is likely to occur without being identified by the learner. Moreover, Gass and Selinker (1994) stated that the repetition of the same mistake is considered an error and needs to be treated.

3.3.2 Error analysis (EA)

The importance of EA emerged as a new approach as a response to the claim that CA is able to predict challenges and mistakes of L2 learning process and to attribute them to interference between L1 and L2. One of the first educators to address the value of EA was Corder (1967). He stated that the learning strategies utilised in L1 could be used in L2. In fact, he believes they are the same and are likely to transfer from L1 to L2 when learning a new language. Richards (1971) defined EA as "The field of error analysis may be defined as dealing with the differences between the way people learning a language speak, and the way adult native speakers of the language use the language" (p. 12). Another definition for EA was suggested by Brown (1994), who viewed it as "the significance of errors in learners' interlanguage system" (p. 204). Richards (1971) suggested that EA to be categorised into two types: Interlingual errors which are caused by the interference of L1 (Arabic in this study) and intralingual or developmental errors which are resulted from lack of knowledge of the L2 structural system. In fact, a review of the literature on EA indicates that the majority of previous studies have classified the errors that L2 learners make into interlingual and intralingual errors (Azzouz, 2013). According to Corder (1974a), the importance of errors in learning a language stems from the fact that it could be "evidence that the learner is in the process of acquiring language" (p. 93). More importantly, Coder argues that EA is important for teachers, researchers and learners.

It is also noteworthy that Corder (1967, 1974) proposed a three stage model of EA: Data collection, Description, and Explanation. The model was then expanded by several researchers such as Brown (1994) and Ellis (1995). According to Gass and Selinker (1994), there are several procedures to follow when conducting EA, which are "collecting data, identifying errors, classifying errors, quantifying errors, analysing source of error, and remediating for errors" (p. 67). According to Kharma (1987), challenges faced by Arabs when

writing in English such as spelling, punctuation, mechanics, cohesion, grammatical issues and word order could be attributed to several reasons. These could include inappropriate teaching methods, lack of motivation, unsuitable curriculum, lack of exposure to English, and the rhetorical differences between English and Arabic. Furthermore, Kharma (1987) attributed the majority of the errors identified in her participants' writing to the rhetorical differences between English and Arabic.

Although the use of the EA was a significant element in SLA, several aspects were criticised by researchers such as Chau (1975), Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) Ellis (1985) and Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991). The criticism mainly revolved around the confusion between the description and explanation of errors and the limited understanding of the definitions and categorisations of errors. In addition, EA was limited to the final product of written and spoken languages, and it was observed that EA did not adequately classify and justify the sources of errors.

To conclude, regardless of the weaknesses of EA, it was a useful approach in SLA as it has enabled educators and curriculum designer to better understand the psycholinguistic processes involved in SLA. This has helped to produce a better syllabus and to improve the L2 teaching methods. This has eventually facilitated the effective acquisition of the L2 (Senders & Moray, 1991).

Having reviewed the two linguistic disciplines of contrastive analysis and error analysis, in the following section I shall endeavour to discuss a closely related area, which is *contrastive rhetoric*, in order to facilitate the identification of the errors made by the writers in this research.

3.4 Contrastive rhetoric (CR)

In this section, the focus is on the CR hypothesis, which was introduced in 1966 by the linguist Robert Kaplan, and later expanded by Ulla Connor (1996). According to Connor (1996):

> Contrastive rhetoric is the area of research in second language acquisition that defines problems in composition encountered by second languages writers, by referring them to the rhetorical strategies of the L1. It maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena. As a direct consequence, each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it (p. 5).

In other words, CR is concerned with the way in which the language and culture of L1 affect L2 writing. Moreover, Kaplan (1980) examined the differences in the writing styles between the native speakers of English and other L2 languages such as Arabic. He argued that the development of the paragraph in Arabic is achieved by a complex sequence of parallel construction and intensive use of coordination.

CA plays a crucial role in the field of ESL teaching in general, and it plays a more important role in writing in particular (El Aswad, 2002). There are two primary aspects to the importance of CR at the discourse level. Firstly, it facilitates the process of understanding grammar practically rather than theoretically. Secondly, it enables learners to realise the overlapping inter-relationship between the language and culture. In fact, many studies of Arabic rhetoric (e.g. Johnstone, 1987; Williams, 1982; Al-Jubouri, 1984) were influenced by the interesting findings of Kaplan's (1966), study regarding the Arabic language. The majority of the studies about Arabic rhetoric that were conducted by English native speakers after Kaplan's (1966) study were only replicating and confirming his research findings.

3.4.1 Critique of CR

The discipline of CR was not distant or indeed immune from criticism. Interestingly, some of the criticisms which CR received helped Kaplan to strengthen his claims. A great deal of the criticism was targeted at the type of utilised data which may have affected their very nature. Further, some researchers argue that CR neglected the fact that writing is a process and erroneously treated it as linear and product-oriented. For example, Leibman (1992) believed that CR focused on product and ignored the process. According to Kubota (1997), it is difficult to discover a unique "cultural expression in modern society".

Nevertheless, CR has formed one of the earliest attempts to provide a better understanding of the field of EFL/ESL teaching and learning. In fact, it has supported the field by enabling new theories to emerge such as contrastive pragmatics and discourse and text analysis (Hartmann, 1980).

3.4.2 CR and writing instruction

Writing instruction of EFL learners was focused on the sentence level as educators were concerned more with grammar at the expense of other factors such as coherence and organisation. However, after CR was introduced, there was a shift in the attention. The need for learning EFL was driven by the fact that the English language became the lingua franca in many parts of the world. It was the language of aviation, medical science and the internet. This created a desperate need to learn English. This need led to an enormous numbers of students to travel to English speaking countries to study the language. One of the most arduous challenge students faced was learning to write in English. This challenge motivated linguists to develop new writing approaches to help teachers and students overcome those challenges. These efforts contributed to a shift in focus from sentence level and grammar to looking beyond such surface levels.

In the following section, I discuss the grammatical differences between the Arabic and English languages in order to explain how CR was used to identify the challenges that L2 writers encountered in this study.

3.5 Grammatical differences between the Arabic and English languages

The importance of the Arabic language stems from the fact that it is the language of the holy book of the Muslims (Quran). In fact, this gives Arabic a special value not only to Arab speakers but also to Muslims all over the globe. The spread of Islam in Asia, Africa and some parts of Europe such as Spain and Italy in the Seventh Century increased the number of Arabic speakers, who learned the language for religious purposes. In fact, reading the Quran and the recital of prayers were motivating factors for non-Arab Muslims to learn Arabic. In fact, it is not unusual to find people who can read in the Arabic language fluently but cannot speak it. This is because they learn Arabic to read the Quran, and this does not necessarily mean they understand what they read.

There are twenty two countries in the Arab world whose L1 is Arabic and who are formal members of The Arab League. There are twelve countries located in Asia (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria) and ten countries located in Africa (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Egypt, Djibouti, Somalia, and Comoros). Those countries cover a combined area of over 13 million km², which makes them the second biggest land after Russia. The total number of Arabic speakers living in the Arab nations is estimated to be over 455 Million (Arab League). It is worth mentioning that there are some minorities there whose L1 is not Arabic (e.g. in some parts of North Africa (Berber), North of Iraq (Kurdish) and North Syria (Turkmen)). According to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), there are over 1.8 billion Muslim all over the world. In fact, this number makes Islam the second biggest

religion after Christianity. Those Muslims need to know and memorise some sections of the Quran in order for them to articulate their prayers.

Further, the Arabic language is one of the six official languages in the United Nations (UN). There are also several dialects used in some Arab countries. for example, Saudi Arabia has Najdi Arabic, which is the predominant dialect in the country, Hejazi Arabic in the west of the country along the Red Sea, Hasawi in the east of the country along the Arabian Gulf, Jizani along the southern border with Yemen and Shamali in the northern region of the country along its borders with Iraq and Jordan. Although these dialects are different, they share a great deal of words and people understand one another easily when using their local dialects. The educational system uses the formal Arabic language (Modern Standard Arabic) since it is the language of Quran and all Arab countries consider it the Arabic lingua franca dialect.

Arabic and English belong to two different language categories. Arabic is a Sematic language whereas English is an Indo-European language. There are 28 letters in the Arabic alphabetical system and the writing orientation is right to left. In addition, there are three marks (harakat or tashkeel) which could be added to each letter in Modern Standard Arabic. Those shapes could change the pronunciation of each letter, for example the letter (Alif) in Arabic is equivalent to the letter (A) in English. By adding the three different forms, they will be pronounced as (A, E, O). This means that each single Arabic letter could be used to form three different pronunciations. The Arabic alphabet could therefore be pronounced as 84 letters. These forms only apply to pronunciation but are not used in the written forms. For example,)قطاربني((brown train), if we follow the pronunciation we should write it as (قِطار بِني, in which the form (kasrah) is used as a substitute for the letter (ي) in Arabic. Similarly, the form (dhama) could be used as a substitute for the letter (و). In other words, in Arabic we use more forms in speaking than writing. Moreover, in Arabic written scripts, the

pronunciation remains the same and it is pronounced as it is written with no exceptions or irregular verbs as they do in English.

According to Thornbury (2000), grammar could be defined as "the rules that govern how a language's sentences are formed" (p. 1). Another definition of grammar was proposed by Close (1982), who described grammar as "a system of syntax that decides the order and patterns in which words are arranged in sentences" (p. 13). In fact, grammar has been considered one of the most challenging features to master when learning a new language.

English and Arabic have completely different grammatical structures. In Arabic, words are divided into three categories: nouns, verbs and particles. One of the most distinctive differences between English and Arabic grammars is that sentences in English can only be verbal ones. On the other hand, there are both verbal and nominal sentences in Arabic. According to Ghazala (1995), English sentences are not considered grammatically correct without the presence of a main verb. One of the most common mistakes Arab students make is translating sentences from their L1 to L2 using the same word order, without considering the different rules and structures of the L2. In Arabic, each word has a root, which means that each Arabic word could be traced to its original stem. In the following sections, I shall elaborate on a few challenging grammatical features, which are used differently in English and Arabic. I will also illustrate the nature of difficulty that students often face when encountering them when composing in English.

3.5.1 Subject-verb agreement

In this section, I discuss subject-verb agreement in verb phrases which was observed to be particularly challenging to Arab EFL learners. In English, singular subjects require singular verbs, while plural subjects require plural verbs. For example:

He goes to the beach every Sunday.

They go to the beach every Sunday.

However, in basic Arabic clauses, the verb is always singular and it agrees with the subject in gender but not in number. For example, “katab” is the basic form of the verb “write” and in the following sentences, we notice that the same form of this verb is used with singular and plural subjects, but it is only inflected for gender (the suffix -at is added when the subject is feminine).

Katab altaleb aldars.

Write student the lesson.

Katabat altaleba aldars.

Write student(f) the lesson.

Katab altulab aldars.

Write students the lesson.

Katabat altalebat aldars.

Write students(f) the lesson.

Since Arabic verbs are not inflected for number, subject-verb agreement can be challenging for Arab learners of EFL. In a comprehensive study of the linguistic challenges Saudi students had with English, Al-Sindy (1994) categorised subject-verb agreement errors made by his students into two types. The first one was the omission of the third-person singular marker. According to him, the students were found to commit mistakes like:

*It give them an excitement

*... he only want to ask

As examples one and two show, the suffix (s), as a marker of the third-person singular, were dropped in the verbs *give* and *want*. The second type was in the use of auxiliary and copular verbs. He indicated that the students made errors like:

*... a big garden that have a....

*... "there was many people....

These examples taken from Al-Sindy (1994) indicate that the use of auxiliary and copula may be problematic to Saudi students.

Azzouz (2013) examined the errors of interference of syntactical, lexical, and phonological aspects from L1 into L2 among pre intermediate and upper intermediate students. He used proficiency tests and free writing tests, interviews, and Questionnaires targeted at eliciting information related to both motivation and attitude. The data was collected from120 students studying at Higher Institute of Languages, Aleppo University, Syria. The statistical analysis indicated a significant decrease in the number of errors made by upper intermediate students in comparison to the errors made by pre intermediate peers. Moreover, crucial statistical differences were observed between both groups in terms of performance.

Azzouz (2013) found that his students made a large number of errors related to the use of subject-verb agreement. He stated that they produced errors like:

*My brother's he like watch TV.

According to Azzouz, the failure to add the suffix (s) as a marker of the third-person singular is attributed to the direct translation from L1 Arabic. He argues that instead of writing "My brother likes watching TV" the students relied on the structure of Arabic, which consequently led to the error.

El-Aswad's (2002) study (reviewed in Chapter 2) showed that the students made a good number of errors in the use of subject-verb agreement. Example of the errors in the students compositions were:

*There is some teachers like him....

*Sometimes he make a quiz and answer difficult questions.

Alharthi's (2012) study (reviewed in Chapter 2) indicated that the majority of the students who took part in his study showed a lack of knowledge about subject-verb agreement. He presented some examples of errors from the students' writing such as:

*The boys changes by the all around for him.

*They needs to eat, wear, drink....

Importantly, the findings of the studies listed above in relation to subject-verb agreement are in line with the findings of the current research, as the use of subject-verb agreement was found to be challenging to the students who participated in the study (see Section 6.2.1 in chapter 6).

3.5.2 Verb tense

As Thomas (1993) explains, there are two tenses in the English language: present and past tenses. Future tense does not exist in English; however, it may be denoted by the use of

auxiliary verbs. In fact, tenses of present, past, and future are divided into twelve sub categories. On the other hand, the Arabic language has two tenses: present and past. According to Qafisheh (1997), tenses in Arabic can be distinguished by the completion of the action. If the action is completed in the past, then it is a perfect tense whereas if it is not completed, then it is an imperfect tense. The perfect tense in Arabic corresponds to the English simple past, present perfect, and past perfect tenses whereas the Arabic imperfect tense corresponds to the English present progressive and simple present tenses (Al-Sindy, 1994).

According to Al-Sindy's (1994) study, the use of verb tense in English posed one of the most challenging difficulties to his Saudi students. He argues that such difficulty could be attributed to the fact that Arabic tense system is completely different from English. Al-Sindy stated that the students made errors like:

The use of the simple past tense instead of the present perfect tense resulted in error like:

*and I since seven year ago I did not saw him.

The use of the present progressive tense instead of the present perfect tense:

*Since that time I am still trying to make.

The table below shows other types of errors Arab the writers in Al-Sindy's (1994) study were found to make in several categories of the verb tenses.

Table 3.1

Tenses errors Arab writers made in Al-Sindy's (1994) study

The use of	**Instead of**
simple past	simple present
present perfect	simple present

The use of	Instead of
simple present	simple past
simple present	past perfect
past progressive	simple present
simple present	simple past
past	present perfect

Al-Sindy attributed verb tense errors in his study to the following reasons: negative interference of L1 into L2, absence of knowledge of the L2 verb tenses and overgeneralisation of rules.

El-Aswad's (2002) study showed that verb tense poses as one of the most difficult aspects to mastering the target language. He argues that the students find it hard to distinguish between tenses in English. He presented some extracts of the students' writing that showed some errors in the use of verb tenses. For example, one student wrote:

*She was laughing and talk with us and mak jokes at first.

Moreover, Alharthi (2012) found that the students encounter challenges in the use of a sequence of tenses, which led to errors like:

*There were also students from the third world do not got the help.

Al-Hazaymeh (1994) examined errors of verb tenses among Arab students and attributed these errors to L1 interference. He also argued that the complex nature of the English verb tense, lack of knowledge of L2 grammatical rules and overgeneralisation could be a source of the challenge.

To sum up, previous studies such as Qafisheh (1997), Al-Sindy (1994), Al-Hazaymeh (1994) and El-Aswad (2002) demonstrate that verb tense could be a challenging grammatical aspect to master in English writing. The findings of these studies resonate with the finding of

the current research in relation to the fact that verb tenses are problematic to Saudi EFL writers (see Section 6.2.2 in Chapter 6).

3.5.3 Modal verbs

Modal verbs in English are: can, could, may, might, must, will, would, shall, and should. According to Biber, Conrad and Leech (2002), there are semi modals like have to, got to, ought to, supposed to, going to and used to and so on which share the same function. Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) asserted that in general each model verb has more than one meaning; hence, they classified them according to the meaning they convey. They regarded this feature as a significant challenging factor, which was to master modal verbs usage in English. In Arabic there are no exact equivalents. However, there are several expressions that are used as supplements to their English counterparts although each of them carries only a single meaning.

Hinkel (2011) conducted a study to investigate the most frequent errors in L2 writing among EFL students. He concluded that the inappropriate use of modal verbs was observed in their writing as this example shows:

> *It is also important to have adults by their side whom could advise them when they may make a mistake.

In another study Azzouz (2013) stated that the students produced errors in modal verbs when misplacing adverbs of frequency as this example shows:

> *But always, I think in the job.

Similarly, El-Aswad's (2002) study showed that some students encounter difficulties with modal verbs. For example, one student wrote:

*The good must knows.

To compare the use of modal verbs in English writing between native and non-native speakers, Aijmer (2002) conducted a corpus-based study to analyse 52,000 words produced by French, German and Swedish writers, and she compared it with another corpus produced by native English writers. She concluded that French, German and Swedish writers appeared to use modal verbs in English more frequently than their English peers.

Interestingly, in line with previous studies, the students of the current research made considerable amount of errors in the use of modal verb formation. Thus, it was found to be one of the ten most challenging features to master when writing in English (see Section 6.2.3 in Chapter 6).

3.5.4 Word order

One of the features in which Arabic is different from English is its word order. For example, the adjective in Arabic follows the noun, whereas the adjective in English precedes the noun. In addition, the subject in Arabic verb phrases follows the verb, whereas it precedes the verb in English verb phrases. In the following sections I discuss each of these differences.

Al-Khresheh (2010) examined errors of word order among Jordanian EFL students when writing. The main goal for his study was to investigate the extent to which the interference of L1 (Arabic) syntactic structure could affect the syntactic structure of L2 (English) as a possible reason for errors in word order. Data analysis indicated that students made a total of (1266 errors) in the use of word order. Furthermore, Al-Khresheh attributed the majority of these errors to the interference of L1 (Arabic).

Alharthi (2012) found that his Saudi students produced sentences like:

*What <u>them</u> can do?

*The children poors working for other reasons.

He explained that in example (1) the students inserted an unnecessary pronoun before the auxiliary (can) instead of using (they). On the other hand, the noun preceded the adjective in example (2) instead of following it.

Labidi (1992) stated that Arab students often make errors in word order when writing in English due to their reliance on the structural system of Arabic. He added that the students were found to make errors in word order such as:

*They have in London a flat

(Instead of: They have a flat in London).

Similar to the previous studies reviewed above Al-Khresheh (2010), Alharthi (2012), and Labidi (1992), the current research concluded that errors in word order formed a major challenge to Saudi EFL writers (see Sections 6.2.4 and 6.2.5 in Chapter 6).

3.5.4.1 Subject-verb order in verb phrases

Arabic is a VSO language while English is SVO language. Thus, the subject in Arabic verb phrases follows the verb, whereas it precedes the verb in English verb phrases. This difference can sometimes cause unskilled Arab EFL learners to commit a great number of errors in subject-verb order when writing in English. For example,

أكل أحمد تفاحة.

Because the verb (ate أكل) precedes the subject (Ahmad أحمد) in this Arabic sentence, the exact English translation of this sentence would be:

*Ate Ahmad an apple.

This example explains how the structure of L1 could be negatively transferred into L2. The students in the current research were found to make errors in subject-verb order when writing English. This will be explored in Chapter 6. Interestingly, to the best of my knowledge, this type of error was not reported by previous studies on Arab learners of EFL. Al-Sindy (1994), for example, found that "The only kind of word order errors found in the data is adjective-noun word order" (p. 83).

3.5.4.2 Adjective-noun order in noun phrases

In this section, I discuss the adjective-noun order in noun phrases which is often found to be problematic to Arab students. The structure of noun phrases in English requires that adjectives precede the nouns they qualify. On the other hand, adjectives in Arabic follow the nouns they modify, and they should also agree in number and gender with the nouns. For example, the Arabic equivalent to the English noun phrase "clever students" is "altulabu athkeya", where "altulabu" is the noun, while "athkeya" is the adjective. Consequently, some Saudi learners of EFL seem to negatively transfer these features from their L1 (Arabic) to L2 (English). Some of the mistakes Arab writes often make in this category are:

*I want to learn *English literary*.

*English is the language of *technology modern*.

Other examples of mistakes in word order can be observed with subject -verb order as the following examples show:

*I honestly believe *is it* making me smarter.

*If you ask me why *am I* majoring in English.…

In Al-Sindy's (1994) study, students made errors in the adjective-noun order. He argued that these errors could be attributed to the differences between English and Arabic. That is because the Arabic grammatical structure follows a noun-adjective order whereas in English the adjective precedes the noun. Al-Sindy presented two examples of errors from the students' writing:

*I saw my car very good.

*Ahmed was not driver fast.

Alharthi's (2012) study also showed that word order is one of the most common errors among Saudi students at tertiary level (see Section 3.5.6). He argued that some of the errors that appeared in the students' writing were transferred from L1 (Arabic) as adjectives follow nouns, as the example below shows:

*The children poors working for other reasons.

In the same line, Azzouz (2013)'s research indicated that Arab students appeared to make some errors in adjective-noun order when writing in English. He presented an example from one student's composition:

*I hope to improve my language English.

Azzouz argues that this error could be attributed to either the interference of L1 (Arabic) structure or lack of knowledge of the grammatical system of L2 (English) (see Section 6.2.4 in Chapter 6).

3.5.5 Dropping the subject in noun phrases

Arabic is a pro-drop language, in which the subject of a clause can be suppressed. More specifically, missing subjects are allowed in the subject position in Arabic tensed clauses. This is illustrated in the examples below:

katab-ʕa resalatan

katab-3p.sg.masc a letter

"He wrote a letter."

qara-at ketaban

read-3p.sg.f a book

"She read a book."

In the Arabic sentences above, there is no overt subject in the subject position. However, due to the fact that Arabic is a rich agreement language, these sentences are grammatical. As verbs in Arabic are inflected for person, number and gender, these inflections provide the information required to recognise the missing subject (AlAlamat, 2014; Alnajadat, 2017). This is different from English where affirmative sentences must begin with a subject. This difference has caused some confusion amongst the student participants, and subsequently resulted in errors (See Section 6.2.6 in Chapter 6).

Al-Sindy (1994) also reported that his Saudi participants sometimes omitted the subject pronouns when writing in English, as the following examples show:

*When arrived to Jeddah,..

*unfortunately happened what my father expects . . .

In the first sentence the subject "I" was dropped, while in the second one "it" was dropped. Al-Sindy (1994) explained that "It is because they are implied in verbs, as explained above. It would be redundant to use them as they would in Arabic. Certainly, these errors are due to mother-tongue interference" (p. 82)

Similarly, Azzouz (2013) found that his Syrian participants tended to omit subjects when writing in English. Examples of his students' errors are provided below.

Table 3.2

Examples of dropping the subject in Azzouz's (2013, p. 97) study

Incorrect examples found in students' writing	**Their correct counterparts**
*Teach students physics.	I teach students physics.
*in that occasion was a new body.	On that occasion there was a new body.
*Agreed with him.	I agreed with him.
*Really is helpful.	Really, it is helpful.
*Just need time.	I just need time.

Expectedly, the participants in the present study were found to make errors in subject-verb order when writing English, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

3.5.6 Articles

Definite and indefinite articles are commonly used in Noun Phrase (NPs). A definite article is defined as "a determiner that introduces a noun phrase and implies that the thing mentioned has either already been mentioned, or is common knowledge, or is about to be

defined" (*Oxforddictionaries.com*, 2017). Examples of definite articles are "the" in English and the prefix "al-" in Arabic as shown in the following sentences:

The	car	is	nice.
Al	sayyara		jamila.

An indefinite article, on the other hand, refers to "a determiner which introduces a noun phrase and implies that the thing referred to is non-specific" (*Oxforddictionaries.com*, 2017). Examples of indefinite articles are "a" and "an" in English. I wish to draw the reader's attention to the fact that indefinite articles do not exist in the Arabic language as the following sentences show:

I read	a	book.
Qara'tu	∅	kitaban

Arab learners therefore, frequently make mistakes when using indefinite articles with singular countable nouns in English. Some of the mistakes that Arab students often make when writing in English:

*I decided to study ∅ English language.

*When I go to ∅ library, I find many books written in English.

*English is *the* universal language.

In addition, unlike English, the definite article "al" must precede some months of the Islamic calendar and all the days of the week. This feature puzzles Arab learners, especially those who tend to think in Arabic when writing in English or to translate directly from Arabic into English. Even if a learner has been in contact with the language for a long period of time,

he/she occasionally struggles with the English article system (Agnihotri, Khanna, & Mukherjee, 1984).

Azzouz's (2013) study showed that errors in the use of articles were the ones that were most recurring among Arab EFL writers. According to Zaghoul (2002), the use of articles represents a major challenge to Arab students wishing to master EFL writing. Moreover, Zaghoul adds that students tended to drop the article (the) and insert unnecessary articles (a, an). Furthermore, Abu-Jarad (2008) found that his students had a low level of competency in relation to the use of articles. Although the students' competency in other aspects of grammar appeared to improve as they progressed to higher levels, their mastery of articles remained unchanged.

Importantly, the lack of proficiency in using the most appropriate articles by the students of the current research shows that it is challenging task as they made a great number of errors (see section 6.2.7 in chapter 6), which consequently tallies with the findings of previous studies.

3.5.7 Prepositions

One of the most common errors Arab EFL learners were found to commit is the improper use of prepositions. The majority of these errors could be attributed to the influence of L1 into L2 writing (Al-Sindy, 1994). According to Mehdi (1981), when writing in English, Arab learners tend to make improper use of prepositions when there is no equivalent in Arabic. He attributed this issue to the literal translation of prepositions from Arabic into English. Although Arabic has a large number of prepositions, the fact that they do not necessarily correspond to their counterparts in English makes it harder to use the right form of prepositions when speaking or writing in English (El-Aswad, 2002). The role of L1 interference into the use of L2 prepositions in writing could be seen in several aspects.

According to Al-Sindy's (1994) study, preposition errors identified in students writing are caused by the improper use, omission or inclusion of prepositions. He stated that the students appeared to misuse prepositions such as the use of (in) instead of (on), the use of (in) instead of (at), the use of (in) instead of (by) and (of), the use of (with) instead of (by) and (to), the use of (by) instead of (with) and (of), the use of (to) instead of (in) and (at), the use of (for) instead of (to), the use of (from) instead of (of), about and from. In his study, the data indicated that some students were thinking in L1 while engaging in L2 writing. Accordingly, it was found that the majority of their improper usage of prepositions was attributed to the interference of their L1 into L2. At different stages of the composing task, a few students were observed to translate literally from Arabic to English, which consequently resulted in the incorrect use of prepositions. Moreover, Al-Sindy (1994) pointed out that some students appeared not to be familiar with the general differences between Arabic and English prepositions, which could cause omission of the necessary prepositions or inclusion of unnecessary ones. Below are a few examples of the errors in the use of prepositions by the students in Al-Sindy's study:

*I was <u>in</u> holiday for three weeks.

* ... In the night.

Tahaineh (2010) examined the use of prepositions among Jordanian students. Data analysis showed that L1 interference was responsible for 58% of preposition errors (1323 errors) that the students made when writing in English. Furthermore, 42 percent of the errors (967 errors) were attributed to the L2 structure. Tahaineh asserted that the improper use of prepositions among Arab EFL students is apparent even among advanced students.

El-Aswad (2002) indicated that prepositions pose a real challenge to Arab EFL writers. They tend to translate from Arabic when they do not know the correct preposition in

English. El-Aswad affirms that the TAP data confirmed the literal translation from L1 some students appeared to carry out when dealing with English preposition throughout the composing task. For example:

*He was looking in my paper.

*But I think they must be supplied by required techniques which helps.

Moreover, Alharthi (2012) stated that most of the students that participated in his study made a number of errors in the use of prepositions. Below are some examples of the preposition errors found in the students' writing in Alharthi's study:

* ... that I the order to goes of children with.

* ... tell you my opinion for lines.

Moreover, Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) argue that the challenges that Arab students encounter using prepositions when writing in English could be attributed to the complex nature of the preposition structure.

To sum up, the studies reviewed above are in line with the finding of the current research which shows clearly that the use of English prepositions is problematic for Arab EFL writers (see section 6.2.8 in chapter 6).

3.5.8 Plural form

One of the distinct features of the structure of the Arabic language is that adjectives could be used in the plural whereas this is not the case in English. In fact, unlike English, in Arabic there are singular, dual, and plural forms, which are used differently.

According to El-Aswad's (2002) study, Arab students experienced challenges in the use of plural in English writing. This difficulty stemmed from the fact that it is not easy to decide whether irregular words in English are singular or plural. He argues that some words in English end with letter (s) as if they were plural; however, they are treated as singular forms in English. Such irregularity could result in errors. For example, one of El-Aswad's students wrote:

*That glasses is not avaluable in our windows.

According to El-Aswad's interpretation, the word (glass) in Arabic can be plural, which could have resulted in confusion between the structure of Arabic and English.

Azzouz's (2013) study concluded that students made errors in the use of the plural form. He attributed some of these errors to the negative interference of L1. Below are examples of the failure to use plural correctly by Azzouz's students:

*I didn't get a lot of mark.

*If you want to see great buildings and great museum….

*I have three childrens and they are boys.

Thus, it can be concluded that the confusion between singular and plural forms among Arab students when writing in English could be challenging to them. Importantly, similar conclusions were reached by the current research (see Section 6.2.9 in Chapter 6).

3.5.9 Punctuation

In classical (Quranic) Arabic, there is no punctuation. On the other hand, in contemporary Arabic, punctuation marks are used to structure and organise writing and to create clarity and stress in sentences. The most common punctuation marks in contemporary

Arabic are commas (,), full stops (.), question marks (?), exclamation marks (!), quotation marks (“), semicolons (;), colons (:) and brackets ([ ]). Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that punctuation marks are not often used in contemporary Arabic, which makes it difficult for Arab EFL students to master them when writing in English. Another source of difficulty for these students is capitalisations. Unlike English, in Arabic there are no such capital and small letters, and in fact, there is only one case of alphabet. Moreover, “waa” in Arabic, which means “and” in English, is used excessively to connect sentences instead of commas. As a result, some Arab writers negatively transfer this feature when writing in English (El-Aswad, 2002).

According to Labidi’s (1992) study, Arab students seemed to omit capitalisations when writing in English. He argues that the poor mastery of punctuation in English could be attributed to the interference of L1 (Arabic) since it is neither widely used nor adequately taught, which consequently resulted in the omission of punctuation in English. Furthermore, Labidi points out that the absence of punctuation in Arabic writing in the first place could be responsible for the tendency of writing longer sentences among Arab EFL writers.

Another study conducted by Qaddumi (1995) indicated that the misuse of punctuation among Arab students’ writing in English is one of the factors affecting coherence in their writing.

Fageeh’s (2003) study indicated that Saudi students seemed unaware of the punctuation rules. They encountered difficulty in determining the proper use of punctuation when engaged in a composing task. He argues that Saudi students need considerable help from their teachers to teach them the nature of punctuation and to provide them with handouts showing some practical examples of punctuation usage.

To conclude, the result of the current research resonates with other results reviewed which explicitly shows that Arab EFL students encounter challenges in the use of punctuation

when writing in English as per El-Aswad (2002), Labidi (1992), Qaddumi (1995), Al-Semari (1993) and Fageeh (2003) (see section 6.2.10 in Chapter 6).

In order to locate my study within the broader literature, in the following sections I review previous studies on the different linguistic errors made by L2 writers and highlight their strengths and limitations as well as their relevance to this study.

3.6 Previous studies on the linguistic errors made by L2 writers

In this section, I review the literature on the linguistic errors made by L2 writers with different first languages, by Arab learners and by Saudi learners.

3.6.1 Previous studies on the linguistic errors made by L2 writers with different first languages

In this section, I review a number of studies which investigated the types of grammatical challenges EFL learners with different L1s encounter when composing in English. The goal is to provide an overview of the grammatical aspects of English writing which have been found to be especially problematic to EFL writers. The participants in these studies came from a variety of language backgrounds, including, Hindi, Iranian, Japanese, Thai, Spanish, Chinese and Korean. Therefore, the studies reviewed in the section are organised according to the L1s of the research participants.

In an Asian context, Khansir (2013) carried out a study to investigate the kinds of errors made by 200 university students of the English language. Two groups of English learners participated in the study: ESL students in Mysore, India and EFL learners in Bushehr, Iran. The participants' ages were between 20 and 24. Three instruments were used in this research: A demographic information questionnaire, An English Proficiency Test, and a Grammaticality Judgment Test. The proficiency test assessed the students' general

proficiency in English. The Grammaticality Judgment Test consisted of two parts: an essay writing task and various multiple choice questions. These questions examined such areas as the use of articles, conjunctions, spelling and punctuation. The results showed that the most frequent errors committed by the students belonged to the category of punctuation. More specifically, 22% of the mistakes made by both Indian and Iranian students were punctuation mistakes. The researcher also noticed that the participants had spelling problems. He found that 14% of the Indian student's errors were categorised as spelling mistakes, while 19% of the Iranian students' errors fell in the same category.

Kubota (1998) examined whether Japanese university students studying English displayed a similar or different discourse pattern when writing in Japanese (their L1) and in English (their L2). The researcher was also interested in assessing whether those similarities or differences had a significant effect on the quality of the students' essays. The students were asked to write two essays: one in Japanese and another in English. They were divided into two groups. 22 students were asked to write about an expository topic, and 24 students wrote about a persuasive topic. Interviews were then conducted with the students to elicit their opinions on the rhetorical styles they employed in their writing. Findings revealed that almost half of the students employed similar patterns when writing in Japanese and in English. In addition, a positive correlation was found between L1 and L2 organisational patterns.

Similarly, Hirose (2003) compared the organisational patterns used by Japanese learners of EFL when writing argumentative essays in Japanese and English. The aim was to compare the writers' organisational patterns, organisation scores, and the quality of their essays. Data analysis showed the following: (1) a number of deductive organisational patterns were employed by most of the students when they wrote in both Japanese and English; (2) there was no significant correlation between the students' organisation scores in Japanese and English; (3) there were significant differences between total and organisation scores on

Japanese and English compositions; and (4) a few students had difficulty in text organisation in both languages.

In the same context, Baba (2009) examined the effect of the lexical proficiency of 68 Japanese learners on writing summaries in English. Students were asked to write two different summaries in English. Among other things, the students' lexical proficiency and English proficiency were assessed. Results revealed that various features of L2 lexical proficiency had various effects on the students' summary writing. The researcher also pointed out that "two factors in particular (structure of semantic network of words and the ability to metalinguistically manipulate words) may constitute the construct of summary writing in L2".

Another study was conducted by Dalgish (1985) to identify the most common errors of students writing at a University in USA. This study included the analysis of 350 essays produced by students from different L1 e.g. Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese, Russian, Polish and Greek. The analysis of the sentences written by the students was conducted using computer-assisted analysis of essays. This process showed that the most frequent challenging aspects that the students encountered in their writing were from the misuse of prepositions and thereafter followed by difficulties in determining subject -verb agreement.

Interested in the linguistic difficulties that L2 writers experience, Pongsiriwet (2001) examined the frequency of grammatical errors committed by Thai university students when writing in English. The researcher also studied how the discourse features of cohesion and coherence were manifested in the students' writing, and whether there were statistically significant correlations between those features and grammar. Data was collected from 155 freshman students from different humanities and science majors at Kasetsart University, Thailand. Students were asked to write either descriptive or narrative essays during regular class time. The findings showed that the most frequent types of errors made by the students were in the areas of subject-verb agreement, verb formation and verb tenses. Students also

made mistakes in the use of nouns, pronouns, prepositions and articles. In addition, grammatical accuracy and coherence were found to be significantly correlated. However, no statistically significant correlation was obtained between grammatical accuracy and cohesion.

A wide-scale research study was carried out by Johnson, Mercado and Acevedo (2012) to examine certain types of pre-task planning employed by Spanish learners of English and the impact those tasks had on the students' compositions. The researchers assessed and compared the students' writing proficiency as well as grammatical and lexical complexity revealed by five planning tasks. A total of 968 Spanish learners of English participated in this study. Results showed an insignificant effect of pre-task planning on English writing proficiency. As the researchers pointed out, their findings contradicted the results of previous research on EFL writing (e.g. Ellis & Yuan, 2004) in which pre-task planning was found to have a significant positive impact on writing fluency and grammatical complexity. Likewise, other studies (e.g. Ong & Zhang, 2010) found a significant negative effect of pre-task planning on EFL writing fluency and lexical complexity.

Shielamani (1998) studied the use of conjunctions by advanced students of English in India. Data analysis of the students' essays showed that a large number of errors were committed by the students. Examples were: The use of punctuation marks instead of conjunctions, the misuse of punctuation and conjunctions, the omission or addition of "that", and the wrong use of subordinate and coordinate clauses.

In a more comprehensive study, Khansir (2008) investigated the grammatical errors made by 100 sophomore students at Mysore University in India. The focus was on sentence-level errors, and accordingly, mistakes in the use of auxiliary verbs, passive forms and verb tenses were identified. The researcher argued that such errors were indicators of the inadequate teaching of English in India, and he called for more attention to the writing strategies used by the students. It is fairly apparent that the differences between the L1 and L2

systems are not the sole causes of the linguistic difficulties that L2 writers experience but that the lack of proper teaching of English writing could also play a significant role.

More recently, Min (2013) carried out a study in order to examine the usage of verb tense and aspect in essays written by 40 Chinese and Korean students during a placement test of English writing at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The researcher was also interested in investigating whether the use of tense and aspect was correlated with the students' proficiency levels in English writing. The findings confirmed that the students' proficiency levels were related to their use of verb tense and aspect. In addition, the more proficient students were a lot more capable than others in the appropriate use of their knowledge of grammar to meet the essay's topic, content and required objectives. However, knowledge of grammar was not the sole factor responsible for the use of different verb forms. Rather, academic discourse was found to play a crucial role in the composing process. These findings led Min (2013, p. 83) to argue that "grammar could not actually be set apart from the content nor organisation of the content in any kind of authentic writing tasks". The researcher also pointed out that verb tense and aspect should be taught in a manner which could relate to the use of verbs to the features of discourse and essay content. This might "help students build up logical and well-organized ideas in a coherent manner" (Min, 2013, p. 83).

A significant number of studies have shown that learners of English face difficulty with the English article system. For example, Robertson (2000) investigated the varying uses of the English definite and indefinite articles by Chinese students of EFL. The researcher was particularly interested in how the students used articles in referring noun phrases, and therefore, a referential communication task was used to collect samples from the students. The results showed that the students used articles in 78% of contexts where native speakers would use an article. In the rest of the contexts, the students omitted obligatory articles. Among other

reasons, Robertson (2000) attributed those mistakes to the fact that the Chinese language does not have equivalents for definite and indefinite articles in English.

Similarly, Butler (2002) investigated the metalinguistic knowledge of the article system in English utilised by Japanese learners of EFL. The sample consisted of 80 Japanese university students with different levels of English proficiency. Data was collected using a fill-in-the-blank article test and a structured interview. The aim was to explore the reasons behind the students' choices of certain articles. Data analyses showed conceptual differences among the students regarding their considerations of the audience. Butler (2002) argued that these might be possible causes of the errors that the students made in their choices of articles.

Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005) investigated the improvement of students writing after receiving corrective feedback over the course of sixteen weeks. This study comprised 35 migrant students from different backgrounds such as Iran, Turkey, Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan and India and Sri Lanka. They had arrived in New Zealand two years before the research was conducted, and their ages ranged from twenty to late fifties. Data analysis showed that the most frequent grammatical errors were in the use of prepositions (29.23% of all errors), the simple past tense (11.96%), the definite article (11.45%), Indefinite articles (8.54%), and the present simple tense (9.57%).

A great number of grammatical features were identified in the literature as being particularly challenging to L2 writers. These include the use of verb tense and aspect, auxiliary verbs, passive forms, nouns, adjectives, prepositions, articles, relative clauses and subordinate and coordinate clauses. One of the aims of this study is to explore the extent to which the Arabic language, being the Saudi learners' L1, can be a contributory factor as a source for the challenges the Saudi learners face when composing in English.

3.6.2 Previous studies on the linguistic errors made by Arab writers

El-Aswad (2002) argues that a large number of studies on the writing of Arab students have focused on the written product although attention should be paid to the writing process. When teachers are concerned with the final product at the expense of the writing process, the development of the students' writing skills may be negatively affected (Alhisoni, 2012; Alnofal, 2003). Besides, students do not usually receive sufficient training in composition (Aljumhoor, 1996). We can conclude then that the Saudi EFL students can continue to face writing difficulties if the curriculum of English writing does not adopt recent writing theories and proper teaching methods in order to enhance the students' writing performance.

Kharma (1985) noticed that among the causes of errors made by Arab university students of EFL were the negative transfer from their L1 (Arabic). Dudley-Evans and Swales (1980, in Aljamhoor, 1996) also investigated the Linguistic problems that Arab students faced when writing in English and found out that those problems were caused by the syntactic differences between Arabic and English. Due to the fact that the Arabic structure is completely different form English, interference between the two languages makes it more difficult for Arabs to master English grammar (El-Aswad, 2002). Unfortunately, some teachers are not aware that their students' mistakes result from the large number of syntactic differences between English and Arabic.

Belhaaj (1997) examined the types of grammatical errors made by Palestinian students in the Department of English at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. The students were enrolled in four English proficiency levels, and they were asked to translate texts from Arabic to English. The researcher found that the students made mistakes in a large number of grammatical categories. These were sorted in order of frequency as follows: verb tenses, relative clauses, adjectives, prepositions, nouns and articles.

Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000) studied the writing abilities of 150 Jordanian university students by asking them to write two essays on the same topic in their L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English). The aim was to examine whether a correlation existed between the students' writing proficiency in the two languages. All participants were sophomores and were asked to write 250 words about a familiar topic. The results showed that some organisational features like cohesion and coherence were missing in the students' essays when they wrote in both languages. More importantly, the students made frequent errors when using verb tenses in Arabic and English essays. Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000, p. 174) concluded that "poor writing in English correlates with similar deficiencies in the mother tongue. Thus the common assumption in ELT, that all learners are fully competent in their L1 skills, is unfounded, as is much of the criticism of ELT programmes for speakers of Arabic, based on poor writing skills in English."

Another study examining the most frequent grammatical challenges encountered by Jordanian students at a private university was conducted by Abushihab, El-Omari and tobat (2011). Data analysis revealed that the most frequent challenging feature was the use of preposition, which constituted 26 per cent of the total number of errors. This was followed by morphological errors (24%), articles (21%), verbs (11%), active and passive voices (8%) and verb tense (7%).

Another study was conducted at Al-Balqa University in Jordan by Tahaineh (2010) in order to examine the use of prepositions by junior, sophomore and senior students at the English Department. The study examined a total of 162 written compositions, and data analysis revealed that the most frequent errors the students made were attributed to the interference of their L1. This constituted with 58 per cent of the total number of errors. The errors which were linked to L2 constituted 42 per cent of the total number of errors. The

researcher explained that the students misused those English prepositions that had different equivalents in Arabic. This issue seemed to be problematic even to advanced students.

Azzouz's (2013) study also showed that the rate and frequency of errors made on this study were significantly affected by the negative interference of L1 into L2. Although Azzouz's (2013) research was conducted in different context, utilised partly different instruments, and was limited to the role of interference, it is important to this research in the fact that they both found a negative role attributed to the interference of L1 (Arabic) into L2 (English) writing of Arab learners.

Zreg (1983) conducted a study to explore the problems emerging from the interference of L1 and the way in which they affect learning English structure. The data of this study was collected from fourth year Libyan male and female students at the institution of teacher training. Zreg utilised two types of questionnaires, one for students and the other for their teachers, and a multiple choice test. Data analysis revealed that the interference were positive at some points and negative at some others. Moreover, the interference was observed at the levels of pronunciation, syntax, morphology, and meaning. Students made a significant number of errors in the use of articles due to the interference from L1. Findings of the usage of verbs multiple test indicated that students were not familiar with the grammatical structure of L2. Female students were found to have fewer errors in comparison to male peers. To conclude, Zreg's (1983) study is similar to my research in two aspects. Firstly, they both attributed the interference of L1 into L2 writing as source of some errors. Secondly, they both asserted that females are better writers than their male peers. Zreg did not study gender differences individually as both male and female studied together.

3.6.3 Previous studies on the linguistic errors made by Saudi writers

In this section, I review the literature on the types of grammatical difficulties Saudi learners experience when composing in English. A synthesis of the findings of those studies will be used to compile a list of the significant grammatical challenges for these students. I will then determine whether the same challenges exist in my pilot study data and identify what other challenges are unique to my population.

It is generally believed that the inadequacy of the English curriculum used in Saudi schools, the focus on the final written product at the expense of the writing process, and the grammatical differences between Arabic and English are one of the main reasons for the challenges that most students face with English composition (Alhaisoni, 2012; Aljumhoor, 1996; Alnofal, 2003; Kharma, 1985).

According to Alhaisoni (2012), the poor performance of Saudi students when composing in English is due to the lack of teaching and training in English writing in the classroom. Alhaisoni (2012, p. 144) cited El-Sayed (1983) who argued that "the problems contributing to the poor quality of Arabic-speaking students' English writing comes from many sources, one of which is the way the teaching of English writing is organized." in fact, the curriculum used in Saudi schools is focused on grammar and sentence structure, but there is no adequate practice to help students apply those theoretical aspects to their actual writing. As a result, the teaching approaches used in Saudi Arabia are also focused on vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure. Similarly, Abbad (1988) criticised the teaching approaches used by the teachers of English and described the learning environment as being inadequate to learn English effectively.

Muarik (1982) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia to investigate the grammatical errors made by 20 preparatory and secondary students. He asked the students to translate 36 Arabic sentences into English in order to test their competency in the use of English verb tenses.

Grammatical features were categorised and subcategorised and a statistical analysis was run in order to account for the occurrence of these errors. The interpretation of the data showed that the major source of the errors was intralingual. In addition, the students often used strategies such as avoidance, overgeneralisation and simplification. He also stated that L1 interference was not the main source of the occurrences of those errors.

In the same context, Zafer (1994) studied the different syntactic errors in the compositions of Arab university students of EFL in order to determine their causes and provide possible solutions to reduce them. The researcher also examined the processes and skills the students used when writing in English. Data was collected from 38 male senior students in the Department of English and foreign languages at the College of Education in Medinah, Saudi Arabia. They were given five topics and asked to write a descriptive essay about one of the topics in 30 minutes. Data analysis showed that the students made 1551 errors. These were sorted by their influence on the students' proficiency as follows: inadequate mastery of syntax (50.8% of the errors made), interference (43.2%) and finally overgeneralisation of rules (6%).

To investigate grammatical agreement errors, Al-Jarf (2000) examined 159 grammatical agreement errors of nine senior students at the Department of Translation at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The statistical analysis revealed that disagreeing verbs were more than just pronouns and adjectives. Furthermore, students made a great deal of errors in gender, which were higher than agreement errors. Interlingual errors also occurred more frequently than intralingual errors.

Al-Jarf (2007) conducted another study to examine the errors in English spelling committed by 36 junior students at the Department of Translation at King Saud University in Riyadh. Al-Jarf observed that the main source of these challenges could be the communication breakdown as it controlled the process of producing the correct spelling.

Moreover, the researcher found that her students used avoidance strategy to overcome the difficult spelling of some English words, and she attributed this to the absence of spelling instruction at the University. Further, Al-Jarf (2007, p. 8) found that the interference between English and Arabic spelling systems, or "the orthographic complexity difference between English and Arabic", to be a major source of challenge to the students.

Alharthi (2012) examined the composing processes used by 156 senior students of English at King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The researcher compared the processes and strategies used by proficient and less proficient students when writing in English, and he examined the effect of those strategies on the students' essays. The goal was to find explanations for students' weaknesses in English writing. Three instruments were used to collect data: students' essays, a writing strategy questionnaire and TAPs. The results showed that the students had difficulty at both sentential and intersentential levels. Examples of the sentential problems the students faced were: word order, articles, prepositions, participant-verb agreement, spelling, capitalisation and punctuation, verb tense, word choice, conjunctions, and incomplete sentences (Alharthi, 2012, p. 137). Intersentential problems included underdeveloped ideas, direct translation from Arabic, inclusion of irrelevant ideas and incoherence. Moreover, only proficient students were found to plan their essays before writing (Alharthi, 2012, p. 137). Finally, Alharthi recommended that the results of his research could be used to "draw the attention of teachers to concentrate on the processes of writing in general, and writing strategies in particular, to help their students create clear and well-written texts" (p. 233).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on the factors affecting the writing of EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, other Arab countries and other international settings. Linguistic,

educational, cultural, and motivational factors were found to affect the writing of the current research sample along with some relevant studies from the literature. The chapter also discussed CA, EA and CR, and it pointed out their importance in the process of EFL writing. The criticism of CA proposed by several educators was also presented. The chapter then progressed to demonstrate the grammatical differences between the Arabic and English languages and the extent to which L1 interference could affect L2 writing. Furthermore, the most challenging linguistic features of English were presented and explained. Finally, previous studies on the linguistic errors made by EFL learners with different L1s were presented and the findings were compared with my current research where applicable. The next chapter will present the methodological approach utilised to collect data along with the research instruments and samples. The procedures followed to collect and analyse the data will be also explained.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the CR of the Arabic language and the grammatical differences between Arabic and English. This chapter will present the methodology used in this research to obtain a comprehensive understanding of not only the final written product but also the processes and strategies used to produce such a product. To do so, this research has utilised a mixed methods approach, namely, written products, the TAP, observations (of four case studies) and stimulated recalls. The definition of and the full justification for the use of each method is discussed in detail, along with the advantages and limitations of each.

This chapter also summarises the preliminary study which was conducted before the collection of the main data. The data was collected from the same population. The procedure, analysis and results of this study are discussed briefly. Then, the chapter presents a comprehensive description of the pilot study, followed by the procedure for selecting and classifying the participants of the main sample. It then describes methodically the entire process of data collection from the main sample. The process includes the context of the study, background of the participants, the population, instructions, selection of the essay questions, time scale, location, scoring and rating of the written TAP product of the pilot and the main study holistically, establishing a theoretical framework for the data analysis, transcription, coding scheme for the composing strategies, inter-rater reliability of the identified strategies and the manner in which their frequencies were counted.

4.2 Research design

This research sought to investigate the strategies that Saudi writers used when composing, the challenges they faced with English writing and the possible relationships

between the writing strategies they used and the challenges they faced. The study also aimed to examine the differences in these variables according to the participants' language proficiency and gender. To this extent, this research used a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative tools, namely, a writing proficiency test, verbal reports (TAP), observations and stimulated recalls. The quantitative method was used to count the frequency of strategies in the verbalised TAP and the frequency of grammatical errors in the written products. The reason for using all these instruments is to obtain robust and adequate data.

Triangulation means using more than one method to collect data on human behaviour for analysing and understanding the complexity of a particular behaviour. Stake (2000) states that these multiple data are used to "clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p. 443). The term triangulation is defined by Cohen and Manion (2000) as an "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint" (p. 254). Another definition was proposed by O'Donoghue and Punch (2003), who describe triangulation as a "method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data" (p. 78).

Triangulation of data helps increase the level of credibility and reliability of the research by using data from multiple sources. According to Johnson (1992), triangulating data helps minimise the bias or influence of the researcher, hence enriching the results and compensating for any deficiency in the data collected from one source. It also provides the researcher with comprehensive data, ultimately helping him/her approach the topic from different perspectives. Therefore, triangulating the data can make the researcher more confident about the findings (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012).

Nevertheless, triangulation also has a few limitations. Among these is the need for good knowledge on both quantitative and qualitative data by the researcher. Furthermore, the process is usually considered time consuming.

Because the strengths of triangulation outweigh its limitations, this study utilised a mixed methods approach that involved collecting qualitative data (using a writing proficiency test, the TAP, observations and stimulated recalls) and analysing the data quantitatively.

Regarding data collection, this study mainly relied on qualitative instruments because of the nature of the research, which examines human behaviour and associated cognitive activities in depth. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out,

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, memos and recordings to the self. (p. 3)

Mackay and Gass (2005) state that qualitative data provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the phenomenon of interest. Heigham and Croker (2009) emphasise that qualitative data have been widely used in many disciplines, such as applied linguistics.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data usually consists of words rather than numbers, whereas quantitative data consists of numbers and can be statistically tested. They add that qualitative data is different from quantitative data in several aspects. Firstly, qualitative data is not readily available for analysis, but it needs to be encoded first. Secondly, it may be interpreted in several ways. Finally, the analysis of qualitative data is mostly based on words, and a holistic evaluation of the study is based on the researcher.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), the qualitative method is unique in its diversity of data collection instruments used, such as verbal reports, interviews and observations. These methods are capable of creating a clearer image and a more comprehensive perception of the activities that may take a place in the participants' minds.

Regarding data analysis, the quantitative method was used in this study to calculate the frequencies and percentages of the writing strategies used during the TAP composing session. It was also utilised to calculate the linguistic errors identified in the written products of the TAP. In addition, two statistical tests (independent samples t-tests and Mann-Whitney tests) were applied to compare the behaviour of the skilled and unskilled groups, as well as the male and female groups. Finally, Spearman's rank correlations were used to explore the relationships between the use of writing strategies and the challenges experienced when writing in English.

4.3 Instruments

In this section, I discuss the instruments that were used to collect data in this study.

4.3.1 Writing proficiency test

According to McNamara (2000), the language proficiency test is utilised to scrutinise the individual differences of students in a particular area. In this study, on the basis of the marking scheme proposed by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel and Hughey (1981) (see Section 4.5.1.3), the writing proficiency test was used to group students into the skilled as opposed to the less-skilled groups according to their performance in the test, instead of using GPA, year of study or instructors' opinion to assess the students' proficiency level. In fact, this procedure was crucial to conduct prior to the TAP task for the selection of the most suitable participants according to their actual proficiency level. Moreover, this step increased

the accuracy and reliability of the measurement utilised to assess the students' writing and to group them accordingly. This procedure was successfully used in other studies similar to the current research (e.g. Emig, 1971; Heuring, 1985; Raimes, 1985; Stallard, 1974; Zamel, 1983; Alhysoni, 2008; Alharthi, 2012; Azzouz, 2013; Elshawish, 2014).

4.3.2 Think aloud protocol (TAP)

As this study focused on the cognitive processes that occurred in the writers' minds, the use of a suitable tool to obtain the required data was needed. According to Olson, Duffy and Mack (1984), the TAP is an effective tool for the assessment of thinking processes. It can also be utilised to investigate the individual differences within the same task. The TAP has been defined by several researchers. For example, Nunan (1992) describes it as a process in which individuals perform a task or solve a problem and verbalise their thoughts as they are doing so. Someren (1994) states that "the Think Aloud Method consists of asking people to think aloud while solving a problem and analysing the resulting verbal protocol." in other words, the TAP involves verbalising what goes on in one's mind whilst engaging in a particular task from the beginning to the end. It involves expressing what you feel, see, think and do in the form of spoken words (Patton, 2002).

The reason for the use of this instrument is to gain a deeper insight into the cognitive processes and strategies that the participants used rather than relying on the final written products and examining them. This technique is successfully used in a wide range of disciplines, such as social science, psychology and education. It has also been successfully utilised in studies similar to the current one (e.g. El-Mortaji, 2001; El-Aswad, 2002; Wang, 2004; Alhaysony, 2008; Chaaban, 2010; Alharthi, 2012; Elshawish, 2014; Alkhatib, 2015).

Advantages and limitations of the TAP

The importance of using the TAP in writing research stems from the fact that it enables the researcher to access the mental processes of the participants and examine how composing takes place instead of relying on the analysis of written text only. According to Hayes and Flower (1983) and Ericsson and Simon (1994), the TAP has the following advantages:

1. It examines natural cognitive processes as they take place.
2. It generates robust data which allow researchers to investigate unknown phenomena.
3. It can identify writing strategies that might be unidentifiable with the use of other instruments.

Ericson and Simon (1993) emphasise that the TAP is the best known tool to note and document the writing process; without gaining access to cognitive and mental activities, these would continue to remain unknown. Raimes (1985) adds that "when it became apparent what the resulting protocol would yield about both speech and writing, and how much more they revealed about the students as writers than mere analysis of products or observations of the writing process, I decided that think-aloud composing was simply too good a tool not to be used" (p. 234).

According to Flower and Hayes (1980), the "Thinking-aloud protocol capture[s] a detailed record of what is going on [in] the writer's mind during the act of composing itself" (p. 368). They add that the TAP allows the mental process to be captured by verbalising thoughts aloud. In another study, Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) emphasise that the TAP can be beneficial in that the data pertaining to cognitive processes can be examined, and it enables researchers to code and analyse these cognitive process.

Nevertheless, the TAP has also been criticised. For instance, Perl (1980) has used the TAP to collect his data, and he argues that "asking students to compose aloud changes the

process substantially, that composing aloud is not the same as silent composing" (p. 19). This claim was supported by Faigley and Witte (1981), who suggest that TAP forces participants to deal with more than one issue simultaneously, and as a result, their performance might be affected. Bracewell and Breuleux (1994) question the reliability of the TAP by arguing that it is a data collection instrument, so it should not be used as evidence of the cognitive processes of writing.

In summary, although the TAP has some limitations, its advantages outweigh its limitations because it offers invaluable access to cognitive processes that are otherwise not accessible through other methods, and it provides a reasonable justification for writers' behaviour. The TAP has been successfully used in several studies in the field of L2 writing (see e.g. El-Mortaji, 2001; El-Aswad, 2002; Wang, 2004; Alhaysony, 2008; Chaaban, 2010; Alharthi, 2012; Elshawish, 2014; Alkhatib, 2015). Accordingly, this study utilised the TAP as a main instrument to collect data.

4.3.3 Stimulated recalls

The value of stimulated recall methodology in L2 research stems from the fact that it enables researchers to gain access to students' cognitive process. According to Gass and Mackey (2000), "such methods typically involve eliciting comments from learners in order to gain insights about their cognitive and psychological processes when carrying out an L2 task" (p. 120). This introspection procedure is widely used in several contexts, such as education, psychology and nursing, in which the participants are video or audiotaped to capture any cognitive activity, and then they are asked to explain their behaviours (Lyle, 2003). According to Nunan (1993), this technique offers access to cognitive processes and gives clarifications which are not accessible through other methods. DiPardo (1994) states that what makes this technique valuable is that researchers could focus on certain extracts of the recording. A large

number of studies in the field of teaching L2 writing have used the stimulated recall method (De Grave, Boshuizen & Schmidt, 1996; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Gass, 2001; Lindgren, 2002; Lyle, 2003; Chaaban, 2010).

Although the stimulated recall technique has been widely applied in the field of L2 research, it has also received criticism over several issues. Commenting on the responses of participants in a video recording, Tjeerdsma (1997) states that students may have been reacting to what is being played in the recording instead of recalling. Another argument is raised by Calderhead (1981), who expresses that when engaging in stimulated recall, participants might be exposed to anxiety which could consequently affect their ability to perform the task. Another limitation of using stimulated recalls is that it relies on information retrieval from short-term memory (STM). The time gap involved increases the likelihood of students using their LTM to retrieve information which could affect their answers (Chaaban, 2010).

In summary, the stimulated recall technique is a significant method in the field of L2 learning; however, one must follow the right steps in using this instrument so that robust data can be obtained. Ericsson and Simon (1994) argue that students are not expected to make any clarifications to their writing processes when engaged in the TAP. To fill this research gap, this study used stimulated recall, aside from the TAP and case studies, to cover all aspects of the cognitive processes used by the writers.

4.4 The preliminary study

A preliminary study was conducted with a small sample of Saudi students with intermediate English proficiency to examine the linguistic features that are challenging to this group and to assess whether the features examined in the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 are also problematic to the population in this study. Conducting a preliminary study benefited the

research in several ways. First, it confirmed the hypothesis of the research that Saudi students encounter difficulties in EFL writing. More specifically, it showed the types of challenges the students encounter. Second, the preliminary study gave the researcher a rough idea of the students' competency level in writing in English, which ultimately helped determine the genre and level of the essays for the main study.

4.4.1 Data collection procedures

Data was collected from junior students in the English department of a public university in the central region of Saudi Arabia from December 2013 to January 2014. The total number of participants was 25. They were all Saudi male students with Arabic as their first language. The participants' age ranged from 19 to 23, with a mean age of 20. The instructions for participating in this study clearly emphasised that the participant must be Saudi and has studied in public schools. Those participants who had studied in private schools or lived abroad were not allowed to take part in this research. This was to ensure that the required sample received the same input and that the reliability of the collected data would not be affected by any variable. This procedure was followed by similar studies in the field (e.g. Alharthi, 2012; Elaswad, 2002; Shawish, 2014).

Data collection was conducted during regular class time. The students were given 50 minutes to write a 300-word essay on the following topic: "Why did you choose to major in English?" The aim of giving the students this question was to give them something they felt comfortable writing about and to provide them the opportunity to express themselves freely. Instructions were given to the students by the head of the department, and no dictionaries or any forms of communication with other students were allowed during the task. After the data collection, the students' essays were analysed manually to identify all the errors made by the participants.

4.4.2 Data analysis

Manual analysis and coding of errors in the students' essays were undertaken to identify the challenges which the students faced with English writing. The findings revealed that the students made a total of 712 errors. These were categorised as grammatical errors (500) and other types of error (212). Grammatical errors constituted 70.22% of the total errors, whilst the other errors accounted for 29.78%. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below present the types of challenges which were found to be problematic for the study participants.

Table 4.1

Grammatical Challenges that Saudi Students Faced with English Writing

Grammatical Challenges	**Examples from the Students' Essays**
Article	English is language of science.
Preposition	I choose major in English because …
Verb tense	It now becomes a basic participant in school.
Verb form	After graduated from college, I will work as an English teacher.
Plural	English is the language of technology specially computer.
Wrong order	I try my best to help them learn it and how should they get the benefit …

Table 4.2

Other Linguistic Challenges that Saudi Students Faced with English Writing

Other Linguistic Challenges	**Examples from the Students' Essays**
Word choice	I find myself when I meet people and ask them about their beliefs.
Missing word	Another reason encouraged me to study English is a religious goal.
Spelling	I had proplems in understanding English.

Other Linguistic Challenges	Examples from the Students' Essays
Punctuation	Knowing English is important when travelling overseas studying abroad and using computers.

Table 4.3 below presents the frequency and percentages of each type of error identified in the students' essays.

Table 4.3

Frequency and Percentages of Errors

Type of error	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Word choice	280	21.16
Spelling	260	19.64
Article	156	11.78
Punctuation	142	10.88
Missing word	140	10.58
Verb tense	132	9.97
Preposition	76	5.74
Plural	68	5.13
Subject-verb agreement	40	3.01
Word order	28	2.11

As evidenced above, the most frequent errors that the students made were in the category of word choice, followed by spelling, article, punctuation, missing word and, finally, verb tense. Interestingly, the findings of the preliminary study have much in common with those of previous research on the challenges faced by L2 writers in general, and particularly

Arab learners, when composing in English. Examples are errors made in the categories of word choice (Alharthi, 2012; Belhaaj, 1997), spelling (Alharthi, 2012), article (Belhaaj, 1997; Butler, 2002; Robertson, 2000), punctuation (Alharthi, 2012; shielamani, 1998), verb tense (Alharthi, 2012; Belhaaj, 1997; Khansir, 2008; Khuwaileh & Al Shoumali, 2000; Min, 2013), preposition (Alharthi, 2012; Belhaaj, 1997), subject-verb agreement (Alharthi, 2012) and word order (Alharthi, 2012). On the other hand, the categories of missing words and plural forms, which were found to be problematic for the participants of the present study, have not been examined previously in the context of Arab writers of English.

Previous research has shown that most of the challenges that learners experience with L2 grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation could be attributed to the interference of L1 features (Beardsmore, 1982). More specifically, the use of L1 elements in the production of the L2 is considered a major cause of errors, especially when the two languages have different structures. According to Dechert (1983), the negative transfer of L1 components occurs when the learner assumes that these have similar forms or functions in the L2. Hence, we might account for some of the grammatical challenges as linked to the L1. In the main study, this was re-considered with further data, and the TAP provided additional insights into the actual influence of the L1 (Arabic) on L2 (English) writing.

4.5 The pilot study

A pilot study was conducted in April and May 2015 with four students from three course levels: second year (two students), third year (one student) and fourth year (one student). They were selected according to two criteria: Their scores in the writing module and their intermediate English proficiency level, as assessed by their lecturer. After that, they were invited to take part in a writing proficiency test. These four students participated in all the piloting stages: The piloting of the writing proficiency test, the TAP and the stimulated

recalls. The piloting was done to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection procedures and the marking scheme, as well as the suitability of the theoretical framework and the TAP analysis. After the piloting stage, these four writers were excluded from participating in the main study.

Conducting a pilot study was very important to the current research because it provided useful information on what I needed to add, revise and change when conducting the main study.

1. It showed the need to have a special designated theatre to contain the large number of participants in the writing proficiency test at the same time. Getting a hold of all students of the English department at one time was challenging because of the different lecture schedules, but it was nevertheless achieved.
2. Throughout the TAP task, a quiet place was needed for the students to carry on writing and verbalising without any interruption.
3. The pilot study indicated the need to include stimulated recalls in this research because some irregular behaviour was observed during the TAPs that needed justifications; as a result, stimulated recall was utilised.
4. The pilot study also showed the need to conduct the stimulated recall interviews immediately after the TAP sessions. Getting a hold of the students could be difficult, and another purpose was to minimise the possibility of the students forgetting the manner in which they had performed the TAP task.
5. Furthermore, the genre and type of the TAP question were formulated according to the students' needs, as seen in the pilot study.
6. The time and warm-up for the TAPs were also improved after the pilot study.

7. Regarding the analysis of the students' data, the marking scheme, grouping criteria, transcribing and coding were tested and revised according to observations during the pilot study stage.

Although this phase was time consuming and laborious, it was a necessary stage of the research.

4.5.1 The writing proficiency test

4.5.1.1 Piloting the writing proficiency test

The composing sessions were conducted in a quiet room to provide the students a suitable environment with no external noise which might interrupt them. The session was strictly controlled, so no dictionaries, talking to peers or any other sources of external help were allowed. The reason for doing so is to create an exam-like environment and thus ensure the validity of the data obtained.

The reason for conducting the pilot study was to check the quality, genre, topic, time scale and procedure for conducting the task. I explained the entire procedure and the aim of the study to the participants and had them sign a consent form accordingly. The genre of the question was descriptive to allow the participants the freedom to talk and express themselves. The prompt was as follows: "Describe your role model in life. Support your answer with details and examples." The samples were then collected, and manual marking was conducted by using the marking scheme developed by Jacobs et al. (1981) (see Appendix F).

4.5.1.2 Scoring the writing proficiency test

The scoring scale in the marking scheme developed by Jacobs et al. (1981) (see Appendix F) consists of the following five bands: content (30 points), organisation (20 points), vocabulary (20 points), language use (25 points) and mechanics (5 points). The total

number of points is 100; each band has certain criteria, and it divides the level of writing into the following four sections: excellent to very Good (83–100), good to average (63–83), fair to poor (53–63) and very poor (34–52). The reason for using this scoring scheme in the current study is that it comprises five criteria covering the different aspects of writing. Such components focus on the composing process and facilitate a reliable, accurate and holistic assessment of writing (Haswell, 2005). Hamp-Lyons (1990) states that these criteria are "the best-known scoring procedure for ESL writing at the present time" (p.87). This marking scheme has been proven successful and has widely been utilised in similar studies in the field of L2 writing (e.g. Chaudron, 1984; Havitefldt, 1986; Al-Hazmi, 1998; El-Mortaji, 2001; Alhaysony, 2008; Chaaban, 2010; Elshawish, 2014).

To comply with the ethical considerations of this study, I concealed the participants' information, and a code was assigned to each student to distinguish between all the participants. I then met with two lecturers from the same department who agreed to serve as coders and raters in my study. These two lecturers were selected because they had similar background and qualifications as I did, i.e. they were both Saudi lecturers who had taught English for more than ten years and they held a master's degree in Applied Linguistics. I started by discussing the marking scheme and the marking procedure with the lecturers. We reviewed each component of the scheme in detail, and I answered all the questions raised by them. After that, we marked the first sample together by following the same criteria of the marking scheme, and we discussed each component until a common understanding of the marking criteria was reached. After this process, we started marking the rest of the three samples independently. Jacobs et al. (1981) state that for a marking scheme to be valid, a third rater should be consulted if the differences between the total scores given by the raters exceed 10 points. In the current research, after the samples were scored and compared with one another, the difference in the total scores did not exceed 5 points. Hence, no additional raters

were needed. The scores were then agreed on, and their means were calculated. Table 4.4 below shows the raters' marks.

Table 4.4

Raters' Scores of the Writing Proficiency Test Used in the Pilot Study

Participant	**Year**	**Score**			**Mean score**	**Proficiency level**
		Researcher	**Rater 1**	**Rater 2**		
S1	2	32	36	31	33	Discarded
S2	2	81	85	86	84	Skilled
S3	3	45	44	42	46	Unskilled
S4	4	64	61	62	62	Average

The mean scores in the above table show that a high agreement was achieved because the scores given by the different raters did not vary substantially.

4.5.1.3 Classifying skilled and unskilled writers

The main reason for using the writing proficiency test was to identify the skilled as opposed to unskilled writers and to group them according to their mean scores so that they could be invited to take part in the TAP and stimulated recalls. Jacobs et al.'s (1981) marking scheme divides participants into the following four groups: excellent–very good, good–average, fair–poor and very poor. By contrast, this study simply grouped the students into the skilled and unskilled groups. After consulting the literature and reflecting, I decided to discard the average scores based on Jacobs et al.'s (1981) guidelines, which draw a broader line between the good and the poor by stating that those participants who achieve a score of 63 or higher are considered excellent or good writers, whereas those who achieve a score less than this are considered fair or poor. to comply with Jacobs et al.'s (1981) coding scheme criteria, I considered students with marks that fell in the range of 83–100 as skilled, and those with

marks in the range of 34–51 as unskilled (see Appendix F). A gap of 31 points existed, and the participants whose scores were in this range were considered average writers; and hence, they were discarded from the study. The reason for discarding these participants was to prevent any possibility of overlapping between the two writer groups (skilled as opposed to unskilled) and to maximise the difference between such groups by setting clear boundaries. The importance of this procedure stems from the fact that this study was concerned with investigating two variables, skilled and unskilled writers; therefore, clearly distinguishing between them was necessary. The table below show the scores given by the three raters to each of the 28 writers in the proficiency test.

Table 4.5

Raters' Scores of the Writing Proficiency Test Used in the Main Study

Participant	**Year of study**	**Score**			**Mean score**	**Writing proficiency level**
		Researcher	**Rater 1**	**Rater 2**		
1	Year 2	87	86	88	87	Skilled
2	Year 2	88	89	91	89.33	Skilled
3	Year 2	94	93	91	92.67	Skilled
4	Year 3	91	94	89	91.33	Skilled
5	Year 3	89	92	90	90.33	Skilled
6	Year 3	92	90	93	91.67	Skilled
7	Year 3	90	89	87	88.67	Skilled
8	Year 4	90	88	97	91.67	Skilled
9	Year 4	95	93	96	94.67	Skilled
10	Year 4	93	92	95	93.33	Skilled
11	Year 4	93	94	90	92.33	Skilled
12	Year 4	84	87	83	84.67	Skilled
13	Year 4	89	88	91	89.33	Skilled
14	Year 4	86	88	85	86.33	Skilled

Participant	Year of study	Score			Mean score	Writing proficiency level
		Researcher	Rater 1	Rater 2		
15	Year 2	46	48	44	46	Unskilled
16	Year 2	41	41	39	40.33	Unskilled
17	Year 2	42	44	39	41.67	Unskilled
18	Year 2	51	53	52	52	Unskilled
19	Year 2	41	40	38	39.67	Unskilled
20	Year 2	51	53	54	52.67	Unskilled
21	Year 2	34	36	32	34	Unskilled
22	Year 3	40	41	38	39.67	Unskilled
23	Year 3	49	52	47	49.33	Unskilled
24	Year 3	38	37	40	38.33	Unskilled
25	Year 3	51	53	50	51.33	Unskilled
26	Year 3	47	49	44	46.67	Unskilled
27	Year 4	44	42	41	42.33	Unskilled
28	Year 4	36	37	33	35.33	Unskilled

4.5.2 The TAP

4.5.2.1 Piloting the TAP

The piloting of the TAP went through many stages and required a considerable amount of time, as the process in itself was time consuming and challenging. First, I met with the two lecturersto decide on the process of TAP data collection. This step involved the location and timetable for both the pilot study and the main study. I then contacted the four participants who took part in the preliminary study and invited them to participate in the TAP sessions. These sessions were conducted in a quiet room so that no interruption would affect the composing process. The room was equipped with a projector. I began by thanking the students for agreeing to participate in the research. Then, I gave them an overview of the TAP, including its definition, purpose and procedure. The instructions for the TAP were read

and explained in both Arabic and English so that the participants would be fully aware of the nature of the protocol.

For a better understanding of the protocol, Ericsson and Simon's (1993) warm-up instructions were borrowed. More specifically, the participants were asked to re-order a word (LTOCPORO = PROTOCOL) and verbalise their thoughts. They were also asked to provide the result of multiplying 23 by 46 by verbalising their thoughts.

The participants' questions regarding the TAP were answered. After that, I played a short video of someone engaging in a task whilst verbalising his thoughts so that the participants would obtain a better understanding of the task. Finally, I demonstrated the protocol to them by describing the room we were in. I verbalised my thoughts whilst writing from the beginning of reading the prompt until I finished revising the produced text. The process included the three writing stages: pre-writing, writing and revising. I pointed out the importance of continuing to verbalise whilst composing because excessively long periods of silence would invalidate the results.

The preparation and warming-up lasted for approximately 55 minutes. This step was crucial for the participants because they were unfamiliar with the TAP. Without a solid understanding of the way the protocol should be run, the validity and reliability of the data could be affected.

After the participants expressed willingness and readiness to apply the protocol, I assigned each participant a particular time that suited his busy schedule. Although the pilot sample consisted of only four participants, due to the nature of the instrument, conducting the sessions individually was necessary to prevent any overlapping of the participants' voices whilst verbalising their thoughts. I also needed to focus my attention on a single participant at a time for better observation.

The TAP session of each participant took place in a quiet room designated for the study. He was given the prompt, a pen, pieces of papers and a digital recording device. He started the session by switching on the audio-recorder and reading the prompt. I sat in a place adjacent to him so that I could observe, monitor and write down notes related to his behaviour without any kind of interference or interruption (Ericsson & Simon, 1980). To comply with the ethical considerations of this research, the lecturers did not attend the TAP sessions, so it was only I and the participants. I tried to minimise my intervention so I that would not interrupt their thoughts; however, I had to remind them to keep talking when a long period of silence was observed. After the participants finished the TAPs, they switched off the audio-recorders and handed them to me along with all their written products.

4.5.2.2 Transcribing and coding the TAP

After the recordings and written products of the TAPs were collected, I started by transcribing and coding the work of three participants. This step was important to check the usability and reliability of the transcription conventions, the coding scheme and the theoretical framework on which the data analysis was based. The transcription of the audio-recordings started with uploading them onto my computer. I then put on my headphone and played each audio while I typed in Microsoft Word on my computer. I frequently needed to pause, stop and restart the audio to ensure I had captured all the details of the discourse correctly. Once I verified my transcription, I kept moving forward in the same fashion.

I decided to discard one of the samples, as the participant did not verbalise his thoughts adequately, and long periods of silence were observed throughout the protocol. Consequently, much of his composing behaviour was difficult to be accounted for (Green, 1998). I then invited the next participant in line to replace him.

The recordings were transcribed in the language they were produced in. I provided the English translation for all segments produced in Arabic. The transcription and coding procedures were laborious, challenging, demanding and time consuming, as I needed to listen to the recordings numerous times to document every single utterance. In doing so, I needed to look at the written product and listen to the recording simultaneously. This stage of data analysis constituted the largest part of my research. I would put on the headset for extended hours to transcribe the protocols and code the strategies utilised by the participants in producing the compositions. To obtain reliable results, I needed to have a good knowledge of the procedure, as well as patience, much time and determination. In fact, the intensive listening to the verbal reports helped me understand some unclear spoken words and unreadable written words, which ultimately facilitated the coding of the strategies used and accounted for the linguistic challenges faced by the writers.

After all the TAPs were transcribed, I started the coding stage. To simplify the process and make the determination of the strategies easier, I decided to divide each transcript into a numbered series so that it was easy to follow and analyse. This step was in line with Flower and Hayes' (1981) recommendation that researchers should mark "the point where there is a shift in the writer's focus, attention, goal, or plan" (p. 237). Each unit of shift in the writer's behaviour, such as reading, writing, thinking, pausing and frustration, was coded. This process was done to determine the types and frequencies of the strategies and the length of each stage of the writing process.

Reliability of the coding scheme

The three piloted samples were utilised to ensure the inter-rater reliability of the adopted coding scheme, as well as the coded strategies. Two techniques were used to do so. First, I coded those three samples and then left them aside for a month. After that, I coded

them again from the beginning. The total numbers of similarly coded strategies at each time were calculated and compared with each other. The average numbers of the strategies that were similarly coded in the first and second coding sessions were calculated according to Scholfield's (2005) formula, as Figure 4.1 below shows.

$$\frac{\text{Number of strategies the researcher coded similarly in the 1st and 2nd coding sessions}}{\text{Number of strategies the researcher coded in the 1st session}} \times 100$$

The following table shows how inter-rater reliability was calculated according to Scholfield's (2005) formula:

Table 4.6

Calculating Inter-rater Reliability for the strategies Identified by the researcher

Participant	**Strategies coded by the researcher for the first time**	**Strategies coded by the researcher for the second time**
SP1	104	99
SP2	86	84
SP3	112	106
total	302	289

Inter-rater reliability: 289 / 302 × 100 = 95.69% agreement.

The second technique I used was to ask one of the male lecturers and the female one to code the three piloted samples. The coding scheme was first presented and explained to them, instructions were provided and questions were answered. Then, the first sample was coded together to ensure that the criteria were clear and that we agreed on the coding strategies. After the three samples were coded, Scholfield's (2005) formula was applied to calculate

inter-rater reliability. The numbers of strategies agreed on by the two coders were calculated and then divided by the number of the strategies that I coded. The number was then multiplied by 100. This process resulted in a high percentage of agreement in the coded strategies as the table below shows:

Table 4.7

Calculating Inter-rater Reliability for the strategies Identified by all three coders

Participant	**Strategies coded by the researcher**	**Strategies coded by the second coder**	**Strategies coded by the third coder**	**Strategies agreed on**
SP1	104	97	94	89
SP2	86	81	84	78
SP3	112	104	108	96
total	302	282	274	272

Number of strategies coded similarly by all raters = 272 strategy / 302 ×100 = 90.06% agreement.

The same procedure was used for coding the TAPs of the main study.

4.5.3 Piloting the stimulated recalls

The study was conducted with the same four students who participated in piloting the other methods. This stage showed the need to conduct the stimulated recall interviews as early as possible to avoid the students' tendency to forget why they behaved in a certain way. The pilot stage also indicated that having the task performed immediately after the TAP sessions is better and more practical for both the students and the researcher. Moreover, stimulated recalls successfully uncovered some ambiguity in the way certain errors occurred, and it gave some justifications for such behaviours. The same procedure used to conduct the stimulated

recalls in the main study was used with the participants of the pilot study (see Section 4.6.2.3).

4.6 The main study

4.6.1 The sampling method and description of the sample

This research was conducted in the English department of a public university in the central region of Saudi Arabia. The reason for selecting this particular college was the convenience involved. I worked there as a teaching assistant, so I have a good working relationship with the department staff. In addition, the preliminary study, which was conducted at an early stage of this research, took place there. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 23, and the first language of all the participants was Arabic. They studied the English language in school for nine years. All participants attended public schools, and none of them received additional English instruction nor lived abroad.

Data was collected from two campuses, one for males and another for females, as these were completely separated for religious and cultural reasons (see Section 1.3 in Chapter 1). However, apart from gender, the characteristics of the female sample were exactly the same as those of the male one.

For anonymity purposes, the participants' names were substituted by codes, which represented their writing proficiency (skilled or unskilled) and their gender (male or female). For example, SM1 represents the first skilled male participant in this study, while UF2 represents the second female participant in this study. A full list of the participants' codes is provided in Appendix G.

4.6.2 Data collection procedures

The main study for the male participants took place between May 2015 and July 2015. For the female participants, it was conducted from June 2015 to August 2015. The data was collected from the English department of a public university in the central region of Saudi Arabia. I met with two lecturers, who agreed to serve as raters and coders in my research, and we started by discussing the suitable locations, dates and time scales for administering the writing proficiency test, the TAP and the stimulated recalls. This meeting was fundamental, as it set the timetable for every stage of the data collection process. It involved accurate coordination in assigning every step of the data collection to a particular time slot, as this study used a mixed method approach, and, thus, more time was needed. The original number of participants in this study was 184 students. As they were from different course levels and sections, an extensive arrangement was required to avoid public holidays or any overlapping of exams. This issue posed one of the most significant difficulties throughout the data collection procedure.

4.6.2.1 Administering the writing proficiency test

With prior approval obtained from the head of the English Department, I met with all the students in the department, except the freshmen, as the majority of them had not yet spent enough time at the university to receive sufficient instruction. In addition, a good number of freshmen tend to change their majors or to drop out of the university. Accordingly, they were not invited to participate in this research. The data collection on writing proficiency was led by me, with the help of the two lecturers who showed their willingness to help from the early stages of the study, as mentioned in Section 4.6.2 above. I met with the participants from the second, third and fourth years in a spacious theatre, introduced myself to them and explained the purpose of the study, as well as the procedure and the duration of the test. The instructions

of the test were explained, and the students who did not meet the test criteria, such as those who studied in private schools, attended additional English courses or lived abroad, were asked politely not to take the test. The reason for this was to ensure that the same amount and quality of instruction was received. The consent forms were distributed to the participants, and I read and explained all instructions. The participants were made aware that participation in the research was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage of the data collection procedure without providing any reason and without any consequences (the Participants' Information Sheet and the Informed Consent Form distributed to the participants in this research are provided in Appendixes A and B). The Participant Information Sheet also included a detailed explanation of the nature of the research, its length and the data collection procedure, including the writing proficiency test, the audiotaping of the participants who qualify for the TAP and the stimulated recalls. All the participants' questions were answered. At first, many of them were hesitant to participate in the study, especially the TAP, as this would involve audiotaping, and their writing would be examined by three different people. Audio taping the stimulated recalls was uncomfortable for some participants too, and they expressed a certain degree of concern over it. In fact, most of their questions were about these issues. Nonetheless, I managed to convince them to participate in the study by assuring them of the following:

A. Their identity would be confidential, as their names were not needed. They were only requested to provide their university ID numbers and email addresses on a blank cover page. These would then be assigned random codes so that nobody would be able to identify them apart from me.

B. I also informed them that none of their lecturers would have access to the audio recordings. I was the only one who would listen to them.

C. Finally, a copy of their marked essay, with all grammatical errors they made, would be emailed to them in case they wished to know their mistakes and work on improving their weaknesses.

The above assurance was confirmed by the lecturers so that the students would be assured that participating in this study would not have any consequences and would not affect their marks in their English modules. Rather, it would help them identify the challenges they faced with English writing and the strategies they used when composing in English. Consequently, the participants were persuaded, and they gladly participated. Only three withdrew. The total time for the writing session was 75 minutes. However, the entire procedure took 105 minutes, as I spent around 30 minutes on preparation, explaining the procedure, answering the students' questions and having them sign the consent forms. The genre of the question was descriptive to draw the participants' interest to write and to maintain their enthusiasm. The question was as follows: "Write an English essay to describe your role model in life. Support your answer with details and examples."

The participants showed interest in writing about this topic, and the majority were engaged in the task. However, a few of the students were observed to be struggling with writing. The main goal of the proficiency writing test was to divide the participants into two groups: skilled as opposed to unskilled writers. Data collection was conducted thrice to cover the targeted population. This was due to time constraints on the part of the participants and schedule concerns because of the midterm exams. Fortunately, a total of 184 samples were collected by the end of this stage.

As mentioned in Section 1.3 in Chapter 1, collecting the data for my research from the female section was impossible for me because of religious, cultural and regulation limitations. It is religiously prohibited, and the regulations of the country do not allow men to access the female sectors. In addition to this, the nature of the instruments of this research, which

involved audiotaping the TAP, observations and stimulated recalls, made the data collection process even more challenging. Because of these reasons, I decided to ask a female lecturer, who was teaching at the same department of the targeted sample, had similar qualifications as I did and had been teaching English writing for 10 years, to collect the data from the female campus. In fact, she had a previous experience in the use of TAP, which assured me that the technique would be used appropriately. Nonetheless, we discussed and agreed on all the details of the data collection procedure.

The data collection for the female participants started with obtaining the needed approval, which was complicated and involved several procedures. In fact, I spent two months to obtain this approval. The female lecturer then coordinated with the head of the department and discussed the procedure and timetable for the data collection. Afterwards, she met with the students of each section individually. She introduced herself and provided some information about me and the research, such as its nature, objectives, procedure and the instruments to be utilised. For validity reasons, the same instructions that were given to the male participants were provided to the female participants. They were informed about the instruments and were given enough time to articulate their questions. The majority of the questions were about the audiotaping of the TAP and the stimulated recall. The female lecturer, who had prior knowledge on the refusal of a few male participants, confirmed the confidentiality of the participants' recordings. She also confirmed that they could withdraw at any time and without providing any reason.

Clearly, the participants were more willing to participate in the writing proficiency test than in the TAP and stimulated recall. The researcher, together with the head of the department, confirmed to them that even the male researcher (I) would not have access to the audio recordings of the female participants. The female lecturer would keep them inside a secure cabinet at the university, and she would carry out the transcription herself. Thus, I was

only allowed to examine the written products and the transcripts, which had random codes assigned to them. Actually, out of 213 female students who were invited to participate in the writing proficiency test, only 67 of them agreed to take the test, and this was not surprising. Therefore, only 67 samples were collected from the female writers.

4.6.2.2 The TAP

Selecting the topic

The choice of the TAP question was very important, and individual differences in the cognitive abilities of the participants were considered. According to Ericsson and Simon (1980), challenging tasks result in a high cognitive load that interferes with verbalisation. Similarly, easy questions are inappropriate because "the closer readers' activities come to automaticity, the more problematic it may be for readers to describe these automatic or near-automatic happenings" (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995, p. 132). Akyel and Kamisli (1996) also suggest that "cognitively demanding language use" is highly recommended during TAP to eliminate the need to rely on automaticity when conducting the task. The participants in this study were from three different course levels; they were second, third and fourth year students. However, they have all successfully passed all writing and grammar modules offered by their English Department. As this study investigated students' writing challenges, using more than one topic that suits the participants' proficiency level was not needed because they had received the same amount of instruction in terms of writing and grammar. After carefully considering the previous reasons and consulting with the students' lecturers, I decided to select a question of intermediate difficulty and from a familiar genre for all the three groups. According to Friedlander (1990) and Manchón, Murphy and Roca De Larios (2005), familiarity with the topic increases participants' engagement in the process. The

following question was chosen: “Write an English essay to describe your childhood and compare it with your life now.”

I strived to give them a topic that they would feel comfortable with so that they would write about it freely. As the difficulty level of the question was average, they were able to verbalise and write more, which minimised the silent periods. Although the genre of the topic was familiar to the participants, I needed to check with them that they had never written about this particular topic. The reason for doing so was to minimise the tendency to write from memory. Although all the previous conditions were taken into consideration, a few unskilled participants seemed to struggle in completing their essays, and one participant seemed to have a writer’s block.

Selecting the participants for the TAP

The original number of participants I planned to have for the TAP was 36 writers: 18 males and 18 females. In each group, I needed nine skilled writers and nine unskilled ones. Regarding the male participants, I started by producing a list of the skilled writers and their total mean scores. I then selected the top five scores and the four lowest scores. The same procedure was utilised with the unskilled participants; a list of them was produced, and the top five of them and the four lowest were selected. The reason for doing this was to maximise the variation between the participants of each level, in the hope that this would reveal more interesting data. After this classification was done, the two groups were invited to participate in the TAP sessions. One of the skilled participants could not be reached, so he was considered withdrawn from the study, and the next skilled participant was then contacted.

The same procedure was followed with the female participants. A list of 18 female participants with their mean scores was produced. The five highest scores and the four lowest ones from the list of skilled writers were selected. A similar list of unskilled writers was

produced, with the four highest scores and the five lowest ones chosen. The 18 female participants were contacted to take part in the TAP, but only 11 of them turned up and performed the TAP. The remaining 7 participants were regarded as withdrawn from the study. The 11 students who participated in the TAP consisted of five skilled and six unskilled students. I decided to discard one of the skilled participants' TAP to have an equal number of skilled and unskilled writers, given that the discarded TAP was exceptionally short. This step was important for the rigour of the data analysis.

Conducting the TAP

The same procedure used to pilot the TAP (see Section 4.5.2.1) was followed to collect the data from the 18 male writers. Similarly, my female colleague followed this process to collect the data from the 11 female writers. As mentioned previously, one of such TAPs was excluded from the data analysis.

The composing process was found to vary from one participant to another, and a variety of interesting behaviour was observed. The challenges encountered by the participants were also noted. These are discussed in the results chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). By the end of the TAP sessions, a total of 28 written products were collected from the participants (14 skilled vs. 14 unskilled, 18 males vs. 10 females), along with their TAP recordings.

4.6.2.3 The stimulated recalls

After each participant completed the TAP session, he was given a 30-minute break, in which I read his written product, compared it with my observation notes and highlighted a few points for discussion. This process was followed by an audiotaped stimulated recall, in which I asked him about the points I highlighted in my notes and requested him to elaborate on them (see Appendix L for a sample stimulated recall). This procedure was essential in

providing clarifications and explanations on interesting aspects of the written products and verbal behaviours. Likewise, my female colleague followed this process to collect the data from her 10 female participants after they completed the TAP sessions.

4.6.3 Data analysis

4.6.3.1 Scoring the writing proficiency test

The total number of male participants who took the writing proficiency test was 184 students. However, after marking the test, I decided to discard 13 samples for the purpose of validity. These samples were discarded for one of the following reasons:

1. The participants withdrew after starting the composing session.
2. The participants wrote essays that were too short.
3. The participants' scores were below 34 points, which was too low and invalid.

This exclusion resulted in 171 samples. These valid samples were marked by me and two raters by using Jacobs et al.' (1981) marking scheme (see Appendix F) to ensure inter-rater reliability. The mean score was calculated, and the participants were placed in one of two groups, skilled versus unskilled, according to the criteria of the scheme. This stage showed that the total number of skilled writers was 31 students, whereas that of unskilled writers was 56, which is approximately double the number of the skilled participants. A total of 84 participants did not qualify for the next step of the study, as they were found to be average writers. For more details about the classification of the participants, see Section 4.5.1.3 'Classifying skilled and unskilled writers'.

As mentioned in the Section 4.6.2.1 above, 67 samples were collected from the female participants. However, after marking them using Jacobs et al.'s (1981) scheme, I decided to discard four samples for validity reasons. Some of the essays were too short or had strayed

from the topic. In addition, one of the students contacted the lecturer and requested to withdraw from the study, so she was excluded.

All marking was performed by me and the same two lecturers who marked the essays of the male writers. The same procedure and marking criteria were utilised. By the end of this stage, 62 samples were marked, and the mean scores were calculated for all participants. This process resulted in the exclusion of 28 students, as their mean scores fell in the range of 51 to 82. The classification criteria for skilled and unskilled writers categorised them as average writers, so their essays were discarded. A final list of 34 students was prepared, which included 19 skilled and 15 unskilled writers.

4.6.3.2 Transcribing and coding the TAP

The statistical analysis and interpretation of both male and female writers, as well as skilled and unskilled writers, were conducted from January 2016 to March 2016. The same procedure used to transcribe and code the piloted TAPs (see Section 4.5.2.2) was followed in transcribing and coding the TAPs of the 18 male writers in the main study.

Regarding the female participants, I explained to my female colleague all the steps that I followed to transcribe the samples of the male participants, and I showed her a few transcribed samples. She was familiar with transcribing the TAP, as she already did the same in a previous research. After she completed the transcription, I started coding the transcripts for strategies according to the same criteria I used with the male participants.

In fact, reading the written products and concurrently listening to the TAP audio recordings simplified the way in which the strategies were coded. Listening to the students' audio recording enabled me to understand and identify the types of strategies used, especially when there was a sound of frustration or change in intonation. I then developed a list of codes to identify the writing strategies that were used by the writers during the TAPs (see Appendix

H). Although this study is concerned with the ten most frequent writing strategies that Saudi students utilised when engaging in English writing, coding all the strategies that the students utilised was necessary to identify the frequency of each strategy. For the purpose of academic rigour, the percentage of each error was calculated instead of the frequency of the error because the number of male participants was approximately double that of the female ones (18 male vs. 10 female).

4.6.3.3 Scoring the written product of the TAP

The TAP written products produced by the students were analytically marked for the most recurrent linguistic errors. This research is concerned with the 10 most recurrent linguistic challenges that Saudi university students encounter when writing in English. However, the written products were first marked analytically for all errors by me and the same two lecturers to identify the top 10 grammatical challenges that Saudi university students encounter when writing in EFL. Then, we attempted to find a justification for the cause of each type of error (e.g. negative interference of the L1 or lack of knowledge on the L2 structure) by using data from the TAP and stimulated recalls. This type of quantitative analysis facilitated the counting of the frequency of errors.

4.6.3.4 Analysing the stimulated recall interviews

The analysis of the stimulated recall interviews was a straightforward process. The students were asked semi-structured questions throughout the task in order to examine possible links between certain aspects of their writing behaviour and the use particular strategies. These interviews were quantitatively analysed to look for a possible pattern of errors that occurred frequently and to provide justification or explanation for the notes taken from my observation of the TAP sessions.

4.7 Ethical considerations

To comply with the ethical considerations of this study, I concealed the participants' information, and I assigned a code to each student to distinguish between all the participants. All personal information, recordings and written data were kept secure, and no one other than I and my female colleague had access to them. Unique codes were assigned to each participant's data, and the lecturers dealt with these codes; hence, the students' identities remained confidential throughout all stages of the research. The same process was applied to the female participants; their identities remained confidential, and only my female colleague had access to their TAPs and stimulated recall recordings. I only had the transcripts of these data, accompanied with codes. Following this procedure was very important for religious and cultural reasons.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the methodology used to investigate the writing strategies of Saudi students and the challenges they encounter when writing in English. A variety of instruments have been used to achieve the objectives of this study: TAPs, observations, stimulated recalls and written samples. The procedures for data collection and analysis during the three strategies of this research (preliminary study, pilot study and main study) have also been explained and justified. In the following chapter, I provide a comprehensive analysis of the writing strategies used by the participants in this study.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion of the Main Writing Strategies that Saudi Learners Use When Composing in English (Research Question 1)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the data obtained from the TAPs and simulated recalls in order to answer the first research question posed in this study. The main writing strategies used by skilled and unskilled learners as well as male and female learners are compared and discussed in detail. Where applicable, the findings are linked to previous research in the field. These findings are interpreted in light of the current literature available and I have also drawn on my own experience as an EFL instructor.

5.2 The writing strategies used by the participants during the TAPs

In the following sections, the writing strategies that were most commonly utilised by the participants of this study are identified and discussed thoroughly. The analysis also focuses on identifying the frequency of their occurrence and the efficiency of their use. In order to obtain an overview of the performance of Saudi university students when they wrote in the English language, Figure 5.1 is presented below which shows the types of writing strategies they used in relation to the frequency of their use.

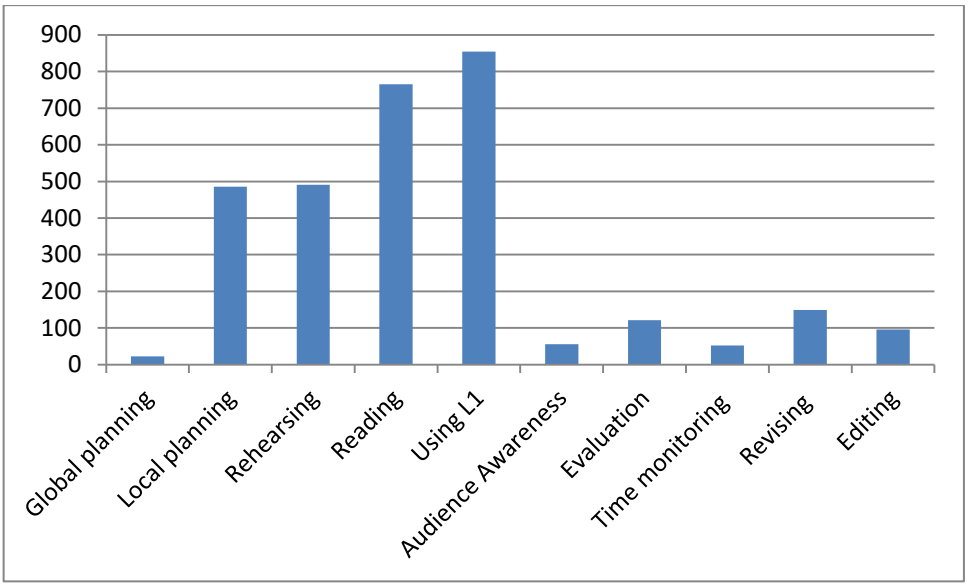

Figure 5.1. The Types of Writing Strategies Used by the Participants and the Frequency of Their Use.

As shown in Figure 5.1 above, using L1 was the most frequent strategy identified in the TAPs of the participants of the current research (used 818 times). The next predominant strategy was reading (765 times), followed by rehearsing (491 times) and local planning (486 times). These were followed by revising (149 times) and evaluation (121 times). Next, editing was used 96 times, and it was followed by the strategies of audience awareness (56 times) and time monitoring (52 times), which were used with fairly similar frequencies. The strategy that was used the least frequently by the participants of this research was global planning (23 times). That could be attributed to the fact that it was used by only 23 writers and its use was limited to the prewriting stage.

It is also important to note that the participants in this research were found to use other writing strategies during the TAPs. However, these strategies were used with very low frequencies, and hence, they were not considered main writing strategies in this research and were treated as out of its scope. These strategies were:

1. Postponing (used 13 times): This occurred when the writers delayed the writing of an idea, an expression or even a paragraph to a later time either because of its difficulty or in order not to interrupt the flow of ideas.

2. Avoidance (used 12 times): This occurred when the writers avoided the writing of an idea, an expression or even a paragraph because of its difficulty.

3. Guessing (used 9 times): This occurred when the writers attempted to guess the correct word or grammatical rule to be used in order to convey the intended meaning.

4. Recalling grammar rules (used 7 times): This occurred when the writers attempted to remind themselves of the use of a certain grammar rule to make sure they were applying it correctly.

As we can see, these strategies were used between 7 and 13 times, which means that they were used by less than half of the participants. In the following sections, I discuss each of the ten main writing strategies mentioned above, point out the stage(s) in which it was used by the participants, and attempt to link the findings to the data obtained from the simulated recalls as well as to previous research on the writing strategies of EFL writers.

5.2.1 Planning

Flower et al. (1992) describe planning as a "constructive strategy" in which "writers must create a unique network of working goals and deal with the special problems of integration, conflict resolution and instantiation this constructive process entails" (p. 181). The researchers clarify that writers can manage this process by performing the following:

1. Building an initial task representation
2. Generating a network of working goals
3. Integrating plans, goals, and knowledge
4. Instantiating abstract goals

5. Resolving conflicts (Flower et al., 1992, p. 184)

It is also important to point out that Flower and Hayes (1980) propose that planning can take place throughout the writing process. The first stage in writing is often linear, in which writers move in a step-by-step manner throughout the planning stage. After planning, writers start to engage in a recursive process that comprises of writing, revising and even more planning.

The majority of the participants in this study were observed to use the two types of planning discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.6.1): global planning (82.14% of the writers) and local planning (89.29% of the writers). Importantly, these strategies have also been reported in previous studies on EFL writing by Arab students (Chaaban, 2010; El-Aswad, 2002; Elshawish, 2014). For example, Chaaban (2010) observed that both her skilled and less skilled Syrian participants used global planning (in the form of outlining at the prewriting stage) and local planning when writing their English essays. However, the skilled ones carried out more detailed plans than their less skilled peers. El-Aswad (2002) also found that his Libyan participants employed both global and local planning when writing their English essays. However, their global planning was a simplistic one since they were eager to start the actual writing as soon as they generated a few initial ideas. On the other hand, the writers in El-Aswad's (2002) study were able to apply local planning successfully to achieve their goals as it facilitated the thinking process and helped them determine what to write next. In a similar Libyan context, Elshawish (2014) reported that global planning was used by both good and poor writers when they commenced the writing task, while they used local planning "to overcome difficulties they encountered while they are engaged in writing" (p. 120). Additional details about these specific findings are furnished in the following sections where I go on to discuss how these two strategies were employed by the participants in this research.

5.2.1.1 Global planning

According to Raimes (1985), global planning refers to everything that writers engage in before they execute the actual writing. It is a wide-ranging activity that comprises setting up targets, producing ideas (from both LTM and STM) and structuring the content. It also involves making decisions on the meaning that is needed to be conveyed to the reader (Flower & Hayes, 1980). Flower and Hayes clarify that during planning, writers set up certain objectives to achieve and then proceed to prepare a plan that serves as s set of guidelines for the construction of the text so that it can achieve these objectives. Therefore, this strategy comprises all thinking activities that the writer carries out before putting pen to paper. These thinking activities are brainstorming, gathering information and jotting down notes. Collectively, these thinking activities contribute towards what could be called "meaning making".

Sasaki (2000) also states that this type of planning involves making decisions about the overall approach and organisation of the writing process. It should be pointed out that global planning does not necessarily provide a detailed plan of the whole composition process. Rather, writers commonly state the main themes that will provide direction for their compositions. For example, when planning his essay, Participant UM7 mentioned during the TAP:

> I will divide the essay into four ... Hmmm ... four paragraphs... Right?
> I really don't ... don't like to write long texts.
> I don't know why, but I don't want to do that at all.
> Of course ... Hmmm ... the first paragraph will be the introduction and ... and ... and ... the fourth one will be ... will be the conclusion...
> What about the second one? Hmmm... That could be .... could be an overall description of the topic ... then ... perhaps I can give examples in the third paragraph.

In this study, global planning was carried out by 23 participants during the prewriting stage. As Table 5.1 below shows, seven skilled participants (Four males and three females) actively engaged in a reasonably long global planning process (ranging from 11 to 19 minutes) before they started the actual writing, in which they reflected on their thoughts for the whole composition. For example, when Participant SM3 was planning his essay, he mentioned during the TAP:

> My childhood was a happy one ... Oh yes ... a really happy one ... lots of wonderful memories ... events ... friends ... places. Everything ... well ... mostly ... was pretty good ... The sad memories were ... were ... ummm ... ummm ... not many ... only a few ... But ... Those wouldn't ... ummm ... shouldn't be called sad ... that wouldn't be an accurate word to describe that phase of my life ... It was part of growing up ... Anyway ... That was better than my life now ... Really! Am I less happy now? My essay will probably convey that ... and ... ummm ... the reader may also be able to see it between the lines.

Interestingly, when planning globally, four of the above participants organised their thoughts out loud, but they did not attempt to record them on paper. For example, although Participant SM8 spent 12 minutes planning for his essay, he only produced a verbal plan with no outline or even notes written down. When performing the TAP, he was saying:

> I like this topic because it makes me think about my life as a series of events. Starting from when I was little...
> Then ... ummm ... elementary school
> Intermediate school...
> Secondary school...
> Choosing a major...
> University...
> Father's passing away...

Interestingly, none of these ideas was recorded in writing. This finding is consistent with those observed in previous studies such as Alam (1993) and Halimah (2001), who also reported that a few of their participants planned their compositions verbally without attempting to write them down on paper. All the other participants who carried out global planning (19 writers) produced written plans of their essays similar to the example from Participant SM3's TAP above.

Importantly, it was found that the length of global planning performed during the prewriting stage varied depending on the participants' writing proficiency and their gender. More specifically, the average time that skilled writers spent on planning was longer than that spent by unskilled ones. This finding is consistent with that of Yang's (2002), Sasaki's (2000) and Angelova's (1999) whose observations were that more proficient writers spent more time on planning before the actual writing took place. Alharthi (2012) also found that the participants who planned their essays before writing were the proficient ones. In the same line, Chaaban (2010) observed that "the more proficient writers produced outlines that were longer, more detailed and more global than those produced by the less proficient writers" (p. 250).

Moreover, female writers in the current study generally spent more time on planning than their male peers. Table 5.1 below shows the average time recorded for global planning in the prewriting stage for each participant in this study as well as the total time spent by each of the four groups of participants.

Table 5.1

Time Spent on Global Planning During Prewriting

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N=14)**														**Unskilled writers (N=14)**													
Gender	**Male (N=9)**									**Female (N=5)**					**Male (N=9)**									**Female (N=5)**				
Partici-pant	S M1	S M2	S M3	S M4	S M5	S M6	S M7	S M8	S M9	SF 1	SF 2	SF 3	SF 4	SF 5	U M1	U M2	U M3	U M4	U M5	U M6	U M7	U M8	U M9	UF 1	UF 2	UF 3	UF 4	UF 5
Time (in minutes)	9	0	11	10	9	13	13	12	4	13	10	11	19	7	1	0	7	8	0	0	6	7	7	10	8	2	0	10
Average	9 minutes									12 minutes					4 minutes									6 minutes				
Range	0 – 13 minutes									7 – 19 minutes					0 – 8 minutes									0 – 10 minutes				

This table shows that the number of writers who carried out global planning was higher among skilled students and female students than among unskilled and male students. In addition, the former groups spent more time on global planning than the latter groups. In general, none of the participants exceeded nineteen minutes when generating ideas before engaging in the actual writing of the English composition. When the results of the different groups were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between skilled and unskilled writers. More specifically, skilled writers spent more time carrying out global planning than unskilled ones (10.1 vs 4.7; $t=3.35$, $p=.002$). These findings are consistent with those of Alaswad's (2002) and Elshawish's (2014) studies of Libyan learners of EFL. Both researchers observed that the proficient writers in their studies produced more detailed plans than their less proficient peers. This could be attributed to the fact that the linguistic knowledge required to write an essay in L2 was adequately present in the skilled participants' minds, as suggested by Flower and Hayes' (1981) writing model (see Section 2.4.2 in Chapter 2). Since the unskilled writers may not possess sufficient knowledge of the L2 linguistic system, this could have possibly resulted in the production of simpler plans for their essays. Elaswad (2002) also observed that the advanced writers in his study "did global planning and did not stop and think as frequently as the novices" and the researcher later concluded that "L2 proficiency seemed to explain some of the differences in strategies used between experts and novices" (p. 48).

When asked about this in the stimulated recalls, Participant UM6 explained: "It was really difficult for me to think about all the vocabulary I needed to write my essay in advance. I mean I thought if I could just jump to the actual writing, that could be less challenging for me ... and I think it actually worked very well." When examining the performance of this writer during the TAP, it was found that he paused for a minimum of 30 seconds to think before writing every sentence in his essay. Thus, it seems that he preferred to use the local

planning strategy (discussed below) rather than the global planning strategy when writing his essay because he thought it would be easier for him to think about what to write next, rather than to plan the whole text at one go.

It was also observed that around 60 per cent of the sample (17 participants) did not closely follow their plans. Rather, they had to pause, modify or delete what they had written once new ideas came into their minds. For example, Participant SM5 (a skilled writer) initially mentioned:

> First, I will talk about my family.

However, as soon as he started writing the first paragraph, he switched from describing his family to describing his childhood friends. When asked in the stimulated recalls about this, he mentioned that his old friends were a significant part of his life and therefore worth mentioning at the beginning of that essay. This observation is similar to that reported by Kaufer, Hayes, and Flower (1986), who reported that none of their participants "followed their plans exactly in producing their essays" (p. 124). More specifically, the researchers found that each essay produced during the TAPs was at least eight times longer than its outline.

With regard to the unskilled participants in the present research, it was observed that two of them (a male and a female) thought about how and what to write mentally and wrote nothing on paper. Once they felt content with their planning, they started writing their essays along that line of thought. Although those writers appeared to be doing well when they commenced their writing, they struggled to continue because their dependence on mental planning was insufficient. For example, Participant UM3 was observed to think in Arabic when planning his English TAP as follows:

لأحتاج إلى الكتابة عن طفولتي . همم ... عندي عدة الأفكار مثل أصدقائي والهوايات والعلم. كنت لدي الكثير من الأصدقاء الحميمين. همم.. اختار والداي مدرسة جيدة لي . همم ...الهوايات كانت السباحة ولعبة كرة القدم. أعتقد أن هذه هي الأشياء الأساسية التي لازم تتضمن في طفولتي! حسناً سأبدأ الكتابة هذه الأفكار الجيدة قبل أن أنساها.

(I need to write about my childhood. I have many ideas like my friends, education and hobbies. I used to have so many good friends. My parents chose a good school for me. Umm the hobbies were swimming and playing football. I think these are the basic things to include in my essay. Good! I will start writing these good ideas down before I forget them.)

However, soon after writing about the first two points that he had planned to include in his childhood description (his friends and education), Participant UM3 started to lose track and to forget what he wanted to write next:

لأحتاج أكتب زيادة .. فكرة أخرى ... مثل إيش؟ الصراحة كتبت عن تعليمي ... وقبل ذلك عن أصدقائي ... همم... إيش؟ إيش ثاني؟ حيث الوقت. من جد ما أعرف عن إيش أكتب الحين.

(I need to write more ... one more idea ... like what? I already wrote about my education ... and before that about my friends ... hmmm ... What? What else? I am running out of time. Really do not know what else to write about now.)

After that, Participant UM3 abandoned this paragraph and decided to move on to describe his life at the present.

5.2.1.2 Local planning

While global planning refers to planning the overall organisation of an essay, local planning is concerned with what to write next, especially at the levels of words, phrases and sentences (Sasaki, 2000). Most of the participants in this research were observed to make greater use of the local planning strategy than the global planning strategy. This result is

supported by previous studies on Arab writers discussed in Chapter 2 (see Alaswad, 2002; Alhaysony, 2008; Elshawish, 2014), which all found that local planning was utilised by the participants more frequently than global planning.

The writers were observed to use this strategy both before beginning to write and during the actual writing. The application of local planning served as a means through which they provided the details needed to develop their texts and to move from one main theme to the next. Their responses in the stimulated recalls indicated that they all paid considerable attention to planning as they thought that a well-developed plan would facilitate the writing process in the L2. Some participants employed local planning to help them produce the introductory paragraph of their essay. For example, Participant SM4 (a skilled male writer) mentioned:

> If I write a good introduction, my ideas will flow naturally. So, I will focus on developing and organising the thoughts that I need to include in the first paragraph. It would be better if each sentence in that paragraph could be developed into a whole paragraph later in the essay.

With regard to the unskilled writers, an example of local planning can be observed in the planning phase of Participant UM7's English TAP. He was concerned about the opening sentence of his introduction by planning to make it as clear as possible. The following extract highlights the use of this strategy:

> أحتاج أتكلم عن طفولتي ... همم. كيف أقدر أكتبه؟ في فقرة كيف ممكن نقسمها... لكن عشان ألجي
> لفقرتي الثانية لازم و ... نوع ما أجذب القارئ ... أحتاج أركز على الجملة الافتتاحية. ممكن نقول كل
> حاجة بيعني ممكن تكون ... نوع من ... نوع من ... الملخص لكل شي.

(I need to talk about my childhood ... Hmmm. How can I describe that in writing? There are many points that I can include ... but to make my essay interesting and

... kind of attractive to the reader ... I should focus on the opening sentence. It can say it all. I mean it can be a ... kind of ... kind of ... summary of the whole essay.)

After thinking for two minutes, Participant UM7 decided:

"Okay, I think if I say ...
لما أفكر في طفولتي، أول اشي جي في بالي
)when I think about my childhood, the first things that come to my mind are(
المدرسة ... زملائي القدام ... و الرياضات المفضلة
)school life ... my old friends ... and ... my favourite sports.(

Participant UM7 then followed through and managed to produce the following sentence in writing:

When I tink about my childhod, the first things are school, old freinds and my favurit ~~sports~~ hobbies.

The following table presents the number of times the local planning strategy was used by each group of participants in this study.

Table 5.2

The Use of Local Planning During the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**														**Unskilled students (N = 14)**												
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**					**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of times local planning was used	16	13	11	16	11	14	17	13	14	29	26	28	24	25	19	27	21	0	23	27	25	25	0	23	30	0	30	26
Average	13.9									26.4					13.3									21.8				
Range	11 – 17									24 – 29					0 – 27									0 – 30				
Subtotal	125									132					120									109				
total	486																											

When the results of the different groups were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female writers. More specifically, the latter group used local planning more frequently than the former group (16.2 vs 24.1; t=-2.42, p=.023). Nonetheless, the majority of the local planning (75%) used by the writers involved single sentence planning. This finding is not surprising as local planning was used to plan what to write next. Examples of this type of planning can be found in Participant SM1's TAP:

Now, I will write about the reasons I have majored in English.

He then moved on to write:

The reasons I have chosen to major in English are the following.

Similarly, Participant SF1 was observed to say:

I will start this paragraph with a sentence comparing friends in the past and friends nowadays.

She then went on to produce the following topic sentence for her paragraph:

My friends in the past were different from my friends nowadays.

This finding is consistent with that reported by Chaaban (2010), who also found that the majority of her Syrian writers did not produce more than a single sentence when carrying out local planning.

Further, for most of the unskilled participants in this research, the challenging part of the writing process came before the actual writing, as they could not decide on how to start their texts. Examples of this difficulty can be found in Participant UM1's TAP:

> I don't know to to ... hmmm ... start this this this part in English. I will leave later when I correct ... correct others.

He then moved on to write:

> I had three friends at school. They were good ones. Their names were ....

It was only during the post-writing stage that Participant UM1 was able to add a topic sentence to this paragraph. He started by saying:

> Now let me check this one again, my friends ... hmmm .... my friends ....
>
> يطب اي ش أكتب الي بداية؟ اها ... حا قول
>
> (Okay what to write at the beginning? Aha ... I will say)
>
> Now I will describe my friends.
>
> That's good (laughing).

This result is in line with those of previous research on L2 writing discussed in Chapter 2. for example, both Pennington and So's (1993) study and Whalen and Menard's (1995) study found that writers with low proficiency levels found it more challenging to write the introduction of their essays than their more proficient counterparts.

5.2.2 Rehearsing

This strategy refers to repeating words or phrases several times as a means to complete a thought, especially when part of a sentence has been written down (Raimes, 1987). Several researchers on EFL writing observed that rehearsing was used by their participants (e.g., El-Aswad, 2002; Perl, 1979; Sasaki, 2000; Zamel, 1983). In the present research, rehearsing was employed by all the participants irrespective of their writing proficiency, yet they differed in the frequency of its application. The skilled writers employed this strategy more frequently than their unskilled peers. Table 5.3 presents the number of times the rehearsing strategy was used by each group of participants in this study.

Table 5.3

The Use of Rehearsing During the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**														**Unskilled students (N = 14)**												
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**					**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of times rehearsing was used	14	12	20	17	15	20	14	18	16	25	23	29	24	23	15	16	14	9	15	10	14	13	10	25	17	20	22	21
Average	16.2									24.8					12.9									21				
Range	12 – 20									23 – 29					9 – 16									17 – 25				
Subtotal	146									124					116									105				
total	491																											

When the results of the different groups were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female writers. More specifically, the latter group used rehearsing more frequently (M=22.9) than the former group (M=14.6) (t=-6.7, p=.000).

For the skilled writers, rehearsing occurred before they began the actual writing. Nonetheless, all of them continued to use this strategy during writing as a means of searching for an appropriate expression or structure, especially when attempting to complete a thought. Participant SM6, for instance, started with:

> I would describe my childhood as the most interesting stage of my life .... errr ... I mean I would describe my childhood as ... exciting. I want to have an engaging beginning.

Then he rehearsed several possible endings for this sentence, and finally repeated the first part of the sentence that had already been written and wrote what appeared to be the ending of this sentence:

> I would describe my childhood as the most interesting stage of my life.

A notable feature observed in the use of rehearsing by the majority (64%) of unskilled writers was that they rehearsed a few words and phrases in their L1 and then translated them into English. They then repeated them when they wrote them down, as the following example for the TAP of Participant UF1 shows:

> The topic is about describing ... describing ... my childhood. I can say that
> طفولتي هو أصدق اطفولة. بثك شيء أتكره عفوطلتيكان أصدق اطفولة هو أصدق اطفولة
> ... أتكشيء أتكره عطفولتي هو أصدق اي.

(The most memorable thing about my childhood was my childhood friends ... The most memorable thing about my childhood IS my childhood friends ... The most memorable thing about my childhood is my friends).

She then wrote down:

The thing I remember from childhood is my friends.

Participant UF1 explained in the stimulated recalls that translating the words into Arabic before putting them down on paper (that is, thinking in Arabic) helped her express her ideas more clearly and accurately than saying them directly in English.

5.2.3 Reading

Reading is another strategy that was commonly used by the writers in this research. The majority of the participants in the current study read the assigned topic several times. for example, when Participant SM4 was about to write the second paragraph of his essay (i.e. the first paragraph of the body), he stopped and said:

Hmmm... Let me think ... The question says “describe your childhood life” and it also says “compare it with your life now” OK! I will now write about my childhood.

After finishing that paragraph, Participant SM4 said:

Now, what do I need to write about? Let me read again ... “compare it with your life now” Aha I will start the comparison in the next paragraph.

Furthermore, the writers were observed to read back words, phrases, sentences, full paragraphs and even the whole composition. An interesting difference was observed between

the skilled and unskilled writers in the use of this strategy. The skilled writers read back a larger portion of the text than their unskilled peers. That is, they often read part or all of the text they had produced; and hence, they were able to assess what they had written, to make the amendments needed and to continue with writing. For example, after writing the introduction of her essay, Participant SF2 said:

> Now l will write about the first idea ... Why I liked my childhood. What do I want to say here? Let me read what I have written ... In ... In the introduction.

Then she read the first paragraph three times before she decided to start her second paragraph as follows:

> I liked my childhood because it was full of happy moments ... Ahhh.... No not moments ... Ahhh ... memories.

She then read that sentence four times before writing:

> Those happy memories were all in Makkah, where I ... grow ... grew up.

Participant SF2 also used the reading strategy when writing the conclusion of her essay. She read the whole text she had produced twice before deciding on what to include in the conclusion (The complete transcript of Participant SF2' TAP can be found on the accompanying flash drive).

The unskilled writers also employed the strategy of reading frequently; however, they mainly repeated single words or phrases. An interesting example of the use of the reading strategy by this group was found in the TAP of Participant UF4 (an unskilled female). She started her third paragraph with:

We used to go to the beach every weekend and played there.

After that, she paused for fourteen seconds and then said:

Hmmm ... ؟هناك بعب لن عتلشرش(What did we used to play there) ... طيب (OK) We used to go to the beach every weekend and played there. We used to go to the beach every weekend and played there. We used to go to the beach every weekend and played there. We used to go to the beach every weekend and played there. We used to go to the beach every weekend and played there.

After that, Participant UF4 managed to write:

For example, we build sand castles and play with balls.

When asked in the stimulated recalls why she used this strategy, Participant UF4 explained: "It helped think clearly about the topic and I was able to remember what we used to play at the beach." This finding is consistent with those reported by previous studies on EFL Arab writers. For example, Elshawish (2014) found that his Libyan participants used this strategy (called "scanning") in order to complete their thoughts. El-Aswad (2002) also reported that the majority of the writers in his research read the texts they had produced to varying degrees. More specifically, they used the reading strategy when "they wanted to choose a suitable word, or begin a new sentence, when they were stuck in finding new ideas or ways in which to order the words, and to make sure that the newly generated sentence went well with the previous ones" (p. 231).

Table 5.4 below presents the number of times the reading strategy was used by each of the four groups of participants in the present research.

Table 5.4

The Use of Reading in the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**														**Unskilled students (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**					**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Reading the topic	5	6	5	8	10	7	7	10	6	16	14	17	12	19	10	8	3	6	11	3	4	4	11	14	12	19	15	13
Average	7.1									15.6					6.8									14.6				
Range	5 – 10 times									12 – 19 times					3 – 11 times									11 – 19 times				
Subtotal	64									78					61									73				
total	276																											
Reading what had been written	15	16	11	14	13	17	19	12	16	22	25	17	23	18	15	12	14	13	16	15	17	15	14	23	30	25	18	24
Average	14.8									21					14.6									24				
Range	11 – 19 times									17 – 25 times					12 – 17 times									18 – 30 times				
Subtotal	133									105					131									120				
total	489																											
Grand total	765																											

When the results of the different groups were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female writers. Specifically, the latter group more frequently read the topic (6.9 vs 15.1, p=.000) and read what had been written (14.7 vs 22.5, p.000) than the former group.

5.2.4 Using L1

The use of Arabic, the participants' L1, was another strategy that the participants in the present study employed. This is a "fairly common strategy among L2 writers" (Krapels, 1990, p. 49), and it was used by the majority of the participants, except five skilled participants (two males and three females). The use of L1 was done in different degrees, as some of the participants depended completely on their L1 to produce thoughts and construct sentences whereas others resorted to it only when they became stuck. More specifically, the participants were observed to employ their L1 for three purposes. Firstly, they used it as a means to recall English words and phrases. Secondly, they used it to generate thoughts, form ideas and to plan their compositions. Lastly, the writers used Arabic when they needed to ascertain whether the words and phrases they recalled suited their intended meaning. These findings are consistent with those of Cumming (1990). The researcher reported that the use of L1 was not limited to producing thoughts, but it was also utilised to retrieve L2 vocabulary and to verify its appropriateness. The following table shows the number of times the participants used Arabic for each of these three purposes.

Table 5.5

The Frequency of Using L1 in the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**															**Unskilled students (N = 14)**														
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**						**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5		UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9		UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5	
Generating ideas	0	12	7	0	0	9	10	11	0	10	12	15	0	8		15	18	16	18	18	21	20	21	18		28	33	25	28	30	
Average	5.4									9						18.3										28.8					
Range	0 – 12									0 – 15						15 – 21										25 – 33					
Subtotal	49									45						165										144					
total	403																														
Retrieving vocabulary	0	7	6	0	0	8	4	10	0	5	6	10	0	11		12	9	11	9	12	10	13	10	12		19	20	14	21	17	
Average	3.9									6.4						10.9										18.2					
Range	0 – 10									0 – 11						9 – 13										14 – 21					
Subtotal	35									32						98										91					
total	256																														
Checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	0	5	3	0	0	4	5	2	0	2	3	5	5	0		7	9	10	5	4	7	11	5	8		13	15	10	8	13	
Average	2.1									3						7.3										11.8					
Range	0 – 5									0 – 5						4 – 11										8 – 13					

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**															**Unskilled students (N = 14)**														
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**						**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5		UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9		UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5	
Subtotal	19									15						66										59					
total	159																														
Direct translation of Arabic texts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		3	0	5	4	0	5	4	0	5		4	2	0	4	0	
Average	0									0						2.9										2					
Range	– – –									– – –						0 – 5										0 – 4					
Subtotal	0									0						26										10					
total	36																														
Grand total	854																														

When the results of the different groups were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between skilled and unskilled writers. More specifically, unskilled writers used L1 for all four purposes of generating ideas (t=-7.25, p=.000), retrieving vocabulary (t=-5.67, p=.000), checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary (t=-6.195, p=.000) and direct translation of Arabic texts (t=-4.500, p=.000) than their skilled peers. These findings are consistent with those of El-Aswad (2002), Chaaban (2010) and Elshawish (2014), who also observed that the unskilled writers in their studies resorted to the use of Arabic (their L1) when writing in English in order to compensate for their incomplete of knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar.

Regarding gender, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female writers in the use of L1 to retrieve vocabulary. Surprisingly, the latter group used it more frequently than the former group (7.4 vs 12.3, p=.036). This is an unexpected finding as female writers were observed to use less Arabic throughout their TAPs. The fact that they resorted to their L1 when retrieving L2 vocabulary is difficult to explain but it could be linked to the fact that the grammar-translation method is prevalent in Saudi schools, which may have caused those students to habitually refer to their L1 when attempting to recall L2 words.

As we can see in Table 5.5 above, the participants turned to Arabic for help when encountering a problem in retrieving a word or an expression in English. A clear example of this was observed in the TAP of Participant UM2:

> I used to play football a lot when I was a child. Sometimes, I didn't just want to be player but I try to be ... I want ... wanted to be ...
> (the coach ... the coach ... the coach) ... مكالح.. مكالح.. مكالح
> Ahaaa ... the coach .... I wanted to be the coach!

According to the participant's responses in the stimulated recalls, that was done in order to find the words that suited the ideas that he had thought about and wished to write down on paper. Nevertheless, this strategy was not always useful, as the use of L1 did not assist the participant in finding the L2 word that she needed to use in her sentence. For example, Participant UF1 attempted to use L1 to retrieve the English equivalent of the word "innocent" to describe her childhood:

My childhood was full of joy, and it was simple and ... and ... no not simple
بدي أقول انو طفولتي كانت مليانة فرح وبنفس الوقت كانت بسيطة ... وش معنى براءة بالانجليزي... ماهي كلمة
simple ...
(I want to say that my childhood was joyous and at the same time it was innocent... what is the meaning of the word innocent in English .... it is not *simple*))

مابتأذكر الكلمة الصح بس
simple
(I don't remember the word... *simple* is OK)

As we can see from the above script, Participant UF1's attempts to remember the English word "innocent" by repeating its Arabic equivalent were not successful, and she was content with using another word "simple", which did not convey the intended meaning accurately.

The participants in this research also used their L1 to help them generate ideas for their English composition. Participant UM5, for example, talked about his favourite subject at school in Arabic, and then he translated all those ideas into English.

كانت تمادتي المفضلة في المدرسة الابتدائية رياضيات. كنت أحب هذا المادة الأقوام واستمتع معها و طرحها. كانت
مستمتعة جدا، وكانت أتعلم من هذا المواد.

Participant UM5 then wrote down what appeared to be an accurate translation of what he had in mind:

Math was my favourite subject at school. I liked to learn numbers and I enjoyed adding and subtracting them. It was really interesting and it was more interesting than the other school subjects.

In the stimulated recalls, Participant UM5 explained that verbalising his thoughts in Arabic assisted him greatly in producing ideas and writing them down in English.

L1 was also used as a means of checking the accuracy of retrieved words and expressions. However, for Participant UM6, its use was not as facilitative as he desired:

بدي أقول أن طفولتي كانت جيدة

(I want to say that my childhood was good)

كيف أترجم هذه الكلمة
طفولة
هل هي جيدة
هل هي أقول...

It was childhood good!

It should be pointed out here that two negative transfers are observed in this quote. First, the participant used the Arabic sentence structure to write the English sentence. More specifically, he started the noun phrase with the noun and followed it with the adjective. That resulted in an ungrammatical sentence in English "childhood good". The use of determiners was another aspect in which Arabic seemed to interfere. Due to the fact that no determiners are needed when writing such phrases in the Arabic language, Participant UM6 dropped the determiner "a" when writing the same phrase in English.

5.2.5 Awareness of the audience

Another strategy that was used by a few writers in this research was awareness of the audience. This strategy was observed when the writers thought about the individuals who

would read their texts. As a consequence, they modified the thoughts they generated and the organisation of their compositions according to that audience. For example, when Participant SM5, a skilled male writer, completed each of the main four paragraphs of his essay, he asked himself if what he had written would make sense to me. An example of his TAP is quoted below:

> Good! I am done with the first paragraph! Good! But ... Hmmm ... Will he ... Hmmm... He ... [the research] get it? Let me check ... Okay ... He wanted me to compare my childhood with my life now... So ... So ... I am supposed to make that clear in my ... Hmmm ... my intro ... طيب ... Okay ... I already said ... that ... Ahhh ... that I will compare them in my essay. I also said the three things ... موضوع ... لا (no ... topics) I will talk about. Well, the third one is not very clear. So ... So ... Hmmm ... I will change it to ... I will cross this phrase "talk about each one of them" ... and ... and I will write ... "compare the good and bad points of each of them" ... Okay ... Good! I think that's clear now.

This quote shows that since the essay was written for research purposes, SM4 considered the researcher his primary and probably only audience. In contrast to the skilled writers, the TAPs carried out by the unskilled group included no reference to any audience. The only exception was Participant UM6, who was observed to revise his choice of words after finishing his essay in order to facilitate the researcher's understanding of his ideas:

> Now, I will check the words I use to see ... تحاسب لما هو مهم .... (It is important that the researcher understands them) ... Hmmm ... شنو أحتاج أغير هنا؟ (What do I need to change here?) Change the verb "get" ... Hmmm ... make it ... make it ... make it ... Hmmm ... Yes! "receive". Also, احذف (delete) "This because it is necessary" ... Hmmm ... أخلي هالجملة (I will just make it) "it is necessary" هالكلمة؟ أوضح صح؟ كذا (This is clearer, right? Yes, it's good).

When asked in the stimulated recalls about this behaviour, Participant UM6 explained that he was worried that the researcher (me) might not comprehend his ideas; therefore, he attempted to use formal verbs and to make his sentences as short as possible. He added that he had learned in one of the writing modules that these two techniques could help make his text clearer and more concise. The following table shows the number of times the participants used the audience awareness strategy.

Table 5.6

The Frequency of Using Audience Awareness in the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**														**Unskilled students (N = 14)**												
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**					**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of times audience awareness was used	3	4	0	1	5	3	4	3	4	7	4	0	5	4	3	0	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average	3									4					1									0				
Range	0 – 5									0 – 7					0 – 3									– – –				
Subtotal	27									20					9									0				
total	56																											

The majority of the skilled writers in this research employed the audience awareness strategy. When the results of the different groups were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between skilled and unskilled writers. More specifically, skilled writers applied the audience awareness strategy more frequently than the unskilled ones (t=4.493, p=.000). This difference between skilled and unskilled writers could be attributed to their differing levels of competency in relation to their writing. Sommers (1980) puts forward the notion that less experienced writers do not pay attention to the possible reader. In contrast, more experienced ones are more likely to "imagine a reader" reading their text (p. 385).

5.2.6 Evaluation

This strategy refers to the verbal appraisal of the produced text during the writing process (Hayes, 1996). The writers in this research were found to employ two types of evaluation:

a) Positive evaluation: positive assessment of part or whole of the produced text.

b) Negative evaluation: negative assessment of part or whole of the produced text.

This strategy was also reported to be used by EFL writers in previous research in the field (e.g., Raimes, 1987, Sasaki, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). One of the clear examples of the use of both positive and negative evaluations in the same paragraph was found in Participant SM9's TAP. He wrote three sentences in the introductory paragraph then he paused to assess whether those sentences were meaningful. After that, he added one more sentence and expressed his satisfaction with what he had written:

> My childhood was a simple and ... and ... hmmm a happy ... a happy one. I remember that I was ... I remember that I was ... an ideal boy, who loved to help others and would and would and would feel proud about it. My father always ... always hmmm

encouraged me to do my best to help others [pause for 20 seconds] ... This is actually not clear ... It does not make sense ... Hmmm ... I need to link those two sentences ... What if I say ... I was proud because I was doing what my father asked me to do ... Brilliant! Now that makes more sense.

Common examples of the use of positive evaluation by the writers in the present study were:

That's good.
Now it's clear.
Perfect!
Brilliant!
This [idea] is complete now.

On the other hand, the following expressions were frequently used by the writers to indicate negative evaluation:

Oh, that's really superficial/not good/ not clear.
No, no, no...
What is this? (Referring to what had been written)

It was noted that the use of the negative evaluation strategy was immediately followed by applying the revising strategy to revise the content and amend it accordingly. In the stimulated recalls, all the 23 writers who employed this strategy explained that it assisted them in identifying weaknesses in the produced text so that they could amend them accordingly. The following table shows the number of times the participants used the evaluation strategy.

Table 5.7

The Frequency of Using Evaluation in the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**														**Unskilled students (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**					**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of times positive evaluation was used	4	3	2	1	1	3	3	4	5	5	3	2	4	3	2	1	3	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	3	1
Average	2.9									3.4					1.9									1.6				
Range	1-5									2-5					1-3									1-3				
Subtotal	26									17					17									8				
total	68																											
Number of times negative evaluation was used	3	2	1	2	2	3	2	3	4	2	4	2	1	5	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	3	0	2	3	3
Average	2.4									2.8					0.7									0-3				

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**		**Unskilled students (N = 14)**	
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**	**Female students (N = 5)**	**Male students (N = 9)**	**Female students (N = 5)**
Range	1-4	1-5	0-2	2.2
Subtotal	22	14	6	11
total	53			
Grand total	121			

When the results of the different groups were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between skilled and unskilled writers. More specifically, skilled writers applied the evaluation strategy more frequently than the unskilled ones (t=4.111, p=.000).

5.2.7 Using time monitoring expressions

This strategy refers to the use of a statement or an expression to indicate how much of the allocated time is left or to indicate that the end of the writing session is approaching. Although this strategy was used by 75 per cent of the writers in the current study, it was surprising that no previous study in the field of L2 has reported its use. Examples of the use of time monitoring expressions by the writers in this study were:

> Only 11/14 ... minutes are left!
> Oh, I need to hurry up.
> I do not think I can finish this in time.
> Too much to write in too little time!

During the stimulated recalls, the majority of the writers who used this strategy (71%) stated that they applied it subconsciously and that monitoring the time helped them manage the writing process more effectively and making the best use of the remaining time. The following table shows the number of times the participants used time monitoring expressions.

Table 5.8

The Frequency of Using Time Monitoring Expressions in the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**														**Unskilled students (N = 14)**												
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**					**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of times time monitoring expressions were used	2	1	2	0	0	3	2	0	3	1	0	3	2	3	0	4	2	2	0	2	3	2	4	3	3	0	4	1
Average	1.4									1.8					2.1									2.2				
Range	0 – 3									0 – 3					0 – 4									0 – 4				
Subtotal	13									9					19									11				
total	52																											

5.2.8 Revision

Two forms of revision were employed by the writers in this study: revising the content of their essays and editing errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Interestingly, the use of these strategies was not limited to one group of participants, as will be discussed in the following sections.

5.2.8.1 Revising

This process involves adding, deleting and substituting parts of the text. It also includes rethinking the word choices. Table 5.9 below shows the frequency of using the process of revision by the writers in the present research.

Table 5.9

The Frequency of Using Revising in the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**														**Unskilled students (N = 14)**												
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**					**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of times Revising the content was used	6	10	4	3	0	7	8	7	9	9	8	12	10	11	7	0	3	0	5	6	5	0	1	0	8	7	10	0
Average	6									10					3									5				
Range	0 – 10									8 – 12					0 – 7									0 – 10				
Subtotal	54									50					27									25				
total	149																											

The table above shows that both skilled and unskilled writers used this strategy. However, it was used more frequently by the former group than the latter one. When the results of the different groups were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between the two groups (t=2.863, p=.008). The skilled writers paid more attention to the content and quality of their written texts. For example, when revising her essay, Participant SF3 (a skilled female) was observed to say:

> Okay, let me check what I have written in this paragraph so far. Hmmm ... Hmmm ... I have talked about my best friend, and ...and ....then I described her personal qualities ... and ... then ... I talked about where she used to live ... Hmmm ... No ... I think I should add how we met and how we became friends before that ... that would make more sense.

A possible explanation for this could be that the skilled writers felt more confident about their linguistic knowledge so they were not occupied with checking the accuracy of the form and preferred to focus on the ideas and how cohesive they were. This idea was also supported by Zamel (1983), Raimes (1994) and Hayes (1996) who believed that proficient writers tend to revise at a holistic level, in that they pay more attention to topic and organisation of ideas. Less proficient writers, on the other hand, are more likely to do surface revisions by focusing on grammatical structures and choice of words. The stimulated recalls confirmed this finding. Almost 90 per cent of the skilled writers, in contrast to only 60 per cent of the unskilled writers, reported that were concerned about revising the contents of their essays before handing them in.

Further, when the results of the two genders were compared using independent samples t-tests, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female writers. More specifically, the latter group used revising more frequently than the former group (4.5 vs 7.5, p=.047).

5.2.8.2 Editing

This strategy targets surface level features of the text, such as grammar, punctuation and spelling. Table 5.10 below shows the frequency of using editing by the writers in this research.

Table 5.10

The Frequency of Using Editing in the TAPs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled students (N = 14)**														**Unskilled students (N = 14)**												
Gender	**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**					**Male students (N = 9)**									**Female students (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of times revising the structure was used	5	6	2	0	4	2	1	2	4	7	4	3	5	4	6	0	4	9	3	7	6	0	6	7	10	12	10	0
Average	2.9									4.6					5									8				
Range	0 – 6									3 – 7					0 – 9									0 – 12				
Subtotal	26									23					41									39				
total	96																											

The table above shows that both skilled and unskilled students used this strategy. However, it is worth noting that it was used more frequently by the latter group than the former. Unskilled writers were more concerned with monitoring the structure of their essays than with revising their contents. According to Stevenson, Schoonen and De Glopper (2006), this could be attributed to their low proficiency, which prevented them from identifying the problems found in their essays. Another explanation for this issue could be that those students did not realise that revising their texts should include both revising the content and the form. The type of instruction as well as the feedback they used to receive on their writing at school was focused only on grammar and vocabulary. Thus, they mistakenly assumed that revision entailed this type of corrections only (Wallace & Hayes, 1991). For example, Participant UM4 (an unskilled male) in the present study was observed to be occupied with revising the verb tenses in one of the sentences in his second paragraph:

> My favourite teacher is ... was ... Errr ... No! Everything should be in the past ... past tense. Oh let me see ... I will cross all those "is" and "are" in the sentences before and write "was" and "were" instead.

When asked in the stimulated recalls about this behaviour, Participant UM4 explained that he was worried about making grammatical mistakes in his English essay, which was likely to change his intended meaning or even make the text incomprehensible.

5.3 Comparing the writing strategies used by the different groups of writers

In this section, I discuss the errors made by each of the four groups studied in this research: skilled vs unskilled and male vs female writers.

5.3.1 The writing strategies used by skilled vs. less skilled writers

A series of independent samples t-tests was conducted for each strategy to assess the differences in its use between skilled writers (n=14) and unskilled writers (n=14). A significance level of 5 per cent, i.e. a p-value lower than .05, was used to establish the level of the statistical significance. Table 5.11 below reports the group mean and standard deviation for the use of each writing strategy.

Table 5.11

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Strategies Used by Skilled and Unskilled Writers

Writing strategy	**Writing proficiency**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Global planning	Skilled	10.07	4.480
	Unskilled	4.71	3.970
Local planning	Skilled	18.36	6.547
	Unskilled	19.71	11.104
Rehearsing	Skilled	19.29	4.983
	Unskilled	15.79	4.791
Reading the topic	Skilled	10.14	4.721
	Unskilled	9.50	4.988
Reading what was written	Skilled	17.00	4.132
	Unskilled	17.93	5.399
Using L1 to generate ideas	Skilled	6.71	5.525
	Unskilled	22.07	5.690
Using L1 to retrieve vocabulary	Skilled	4.79	4.173
	Unskilled	13.50	4.109
Using L1 to check the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	Skilled	2.43	2.138
	Unskilled	8.93	3.293
Direct translation of Arabic texts	Skilled	.00	.000
	Unskilled	2.57	2.138
Awareness of the audience	Skilled	3.36	1.946
	Unskilled	.64	1.151
Evaluation	Skilled	5.64	1.946
	Unskilled	3.00	1.414
Using time-monitoring expressions	Skilled	1.57	1.222
	Unskilled	2.14	1.460
Revising	Skilled	7.43	3.298
	Unskilled	3.71	3.561
Editing	Skilled	3.50	1.951
	Unskilled	5.71	3.911

The set of mean values in this table show as pointed out earlier in Section 5.2 above, that some of these strategies were used more frequently by the skilled writers while others where more common among the unskilled ones. These differences are represented in Figure 5.2 below.

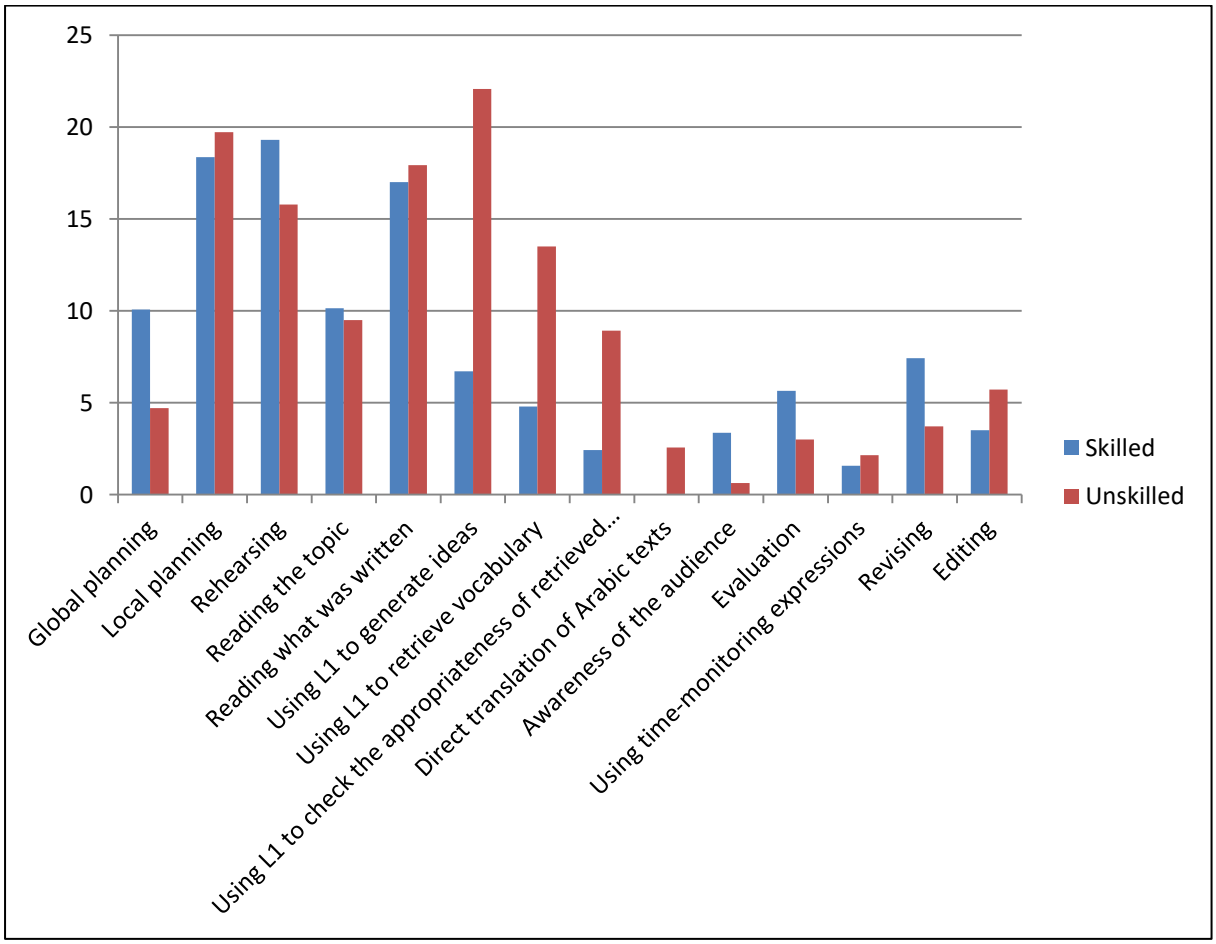

Figure 5.2. Differences in the Use of Writing Strategies by Skilled and Unskilled Writers.

In order to find out whether these differences were statistically significant, Levene's test of homogeneity of variances and independent samples t-test were conducted. If the null hypothesis of homogeneity of variances is accepted, i.e. if the p-value of the Levene's test is above .05 the "equal variances assumed" value is reported. On the other hand, if the

homogeneity of variances is rejected the “equal variances not assumed” value is used. The results are displayed in Table 5.12 below.

Table 5.12

Results of Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances and T-Test for the Strategies Used by Skilled and Unskilled Writers

Writing Strategy		**Levene's Test for Equality of Variances**		**T-test for Equality of Means**			
		F	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**
Global planning	Equal variances assumed	.352	.558	3.349	26	.002	5.357
	Equal variances not assumed			3.349	25.629	.003	5.357
Local planning	Equal variances assumed	2.125	.157	-.394	26	.697	-1.357
	Equal variances not assumed			-.394	21.064	.698	-1.357
Rehearsing	Equal variances assumed	.149	.703	1.894	26	.069	3.500
	Equal variances not assumed			1.894	25.960	.069	3.500
Reading the topic	Equal variances assumed	.068	.796	.350	26	.729	.643
	Equal variances not assumed			.350	25.921	.729	.643
Reading what was written	Equal variances assumed	1.301	.264	-.511	26	.614	-.929
	Equal variances not assumed			-.511	24.340	.614	-.929
Using L1 to generate ideas	Equal variances assumed	.000	.992	-7.245	26	.000	-15.357
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.245	25.977	.000	-15.357
Using L1 to retrieve vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	.048	.828	-5.568	26	.000	-8.714
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.568	25.994	.000	-8.714
Using L1 to check the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	2.070	.162	-6.195	26	.000	-6.500
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.195	22.309	.000	-6.500
Direct translation of Arabic texts	Equal variances assumed	84.71	.000	-4.500	26	.000	-2.571
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.500	13.000	.001	-2.571

Writing Strategy		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Awareness of the audience	Equal variances assumed	2.031	.166	4.493	26	.000	2.714
	Equal variances not assumed			4.493	21.103	.000	2.714
Evaluation	Equal variances assumed	2.377	.135	4.111	26	.000	2.643
	Equal variances not assumed			4.111	23.739	.000	2.643
Using time-monitoring expressions	Equal variances assumed	.152	.699	-1.123	26	.272	-.571
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.123	25.221	.272	-.571
Revising	Equal variances assumed	.913	.348	2.863	26	.008	3.714
	Equal variances not assumed			2.863	25.849	.008	3.714
Editing	Equal variances assumed	5.135	.032	-1.896	26	.069	-2.214
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.896	19.094	.073	-2.214

According to the table, the skilled writers spent more time on global planning compared to the unskilled writers (10.1 vs 4.7; t=3.35, p=.002). This finding is consistent with that of Yang's (2002), Sasaki's (2000) and Angelova's (1999) findings that good writers spend more time planning prior to writing. Alharthi (2012) also found that students who planned their writing were successful writers. In the same vein, Chaaban (2010) observed that more proficient writers produced outlines that were longer, more detailed and more global than those produced by the less proficient writers. These findings are also consistent with those of Alaswad's (2002) and Elshawish's (2014) research of Libyan learners of EFL. Both researchers observed that the proficient writers in their studies produced more detailed plans than their less proficient peers. Elaswad (2002) also observed that the advanced writers in his study "did global planning and did not stop and think as frequently as the novices" and the researcher later concluded that "L2 proficiency seemed to explain some of the differences in strategies used between experts and novices" (p. 48).

Awareness of the audience, evaluation and editing were strategies more frequently used by skilled writers (all p-values <.01). These findings support those of studies discussed earlier in this chapter. Sommers (1980), for example, proposes that less experienced writers do not pay attention to the potential reader. In contrast, more experienced ones are more likely to "imagine a reader" reading their text (p. 385). Further, Zamel (1983), Raimes (1994) and Hayes (1996) believe that proficient writers tend to revise at a holistic level, where they pay more attention to the topic and to the organisation of ideas. Less proficient writers on the other hand, are more likely to do surface revisions by focusing on grammatical structures and choice of words.

On the other hand, the unskilled writers used L1 more often than the skilled ones to generate ideas (6.7 vs 22.1; t=-7.25, p=.000), to retrieve vocabulary, (4.8 vs 13.5; t=-5.67, p=.000), to check the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and to translate texts (both p-

values <.01). As mentioned in Section 5.2.4 above, El-Aswad (2002), Chaaban (2010) and Elshawish (2014) also observed that the unskilled writers in their studies resorted to the use of Arabic (their L1) when writing in English in order to compensate for their weak knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar.

5.3.2 The writing strategies used by male vs. female writers

A series of independent samples t-tests was conducted for each strategy to assess the differences in its use between male writers (n=18) and female writers (n=10). A significance level of 5 per cent, i.e. a p-value lower than .05, was used to establish the level of the statistical significance. Table 5.13 below reports the group mean and standard deviation for the use of each writing strategy.

Table 5.13

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Strategies Used by Male and Female Writers

Writing strategy	**Gender**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Global planning	Male	6.50	4.656
	Female	9.00	5.354
Local planning	Male	16.22	7.952
	Female	24.10	8.812
Rehearsing	Male	14.56	3.110
	Female	22.90	3.247
Reading the topic	Male	6.89	2.676
	Female	15.10	2.601
Reading what was written	Male	14.67	2.029
	Female	22.50	3.979
Using L1 to generate ideas	Male	11.89	7.707
	Female	18.90	11.269
Using L1 to retrieve vocabulary	Male	7.39	4.642
	Female	12.30	7.119
Using L1 to check the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	Male	4.72	3.495
	Female	7.40	5.190
Direct translation of Arabic texts	Male	1.44	2.148
	Female	1.00	1.700
Awareness of the audience	Male	2.00	1.749
	Female	2.00	2.708

Writing strategy	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation
Evaluation	Male	3.94	2.209
	Female	5.00	1.944
Using time-monitoring expressions	Male	1.78	1.353
	Female	2.00	1.414
Revising	Male	4.50	3.294
	Female	7.50	4.223
Editing	Male	3.72	2.653
	Female	6.20	3.706

The set of mean values in this table indicate, as pointed out earlier in Section 5.2 above, that some of these strategies were used more frequently by the male writers while others where more common among the female ones. These differences are represented in Figure 5.3 below.

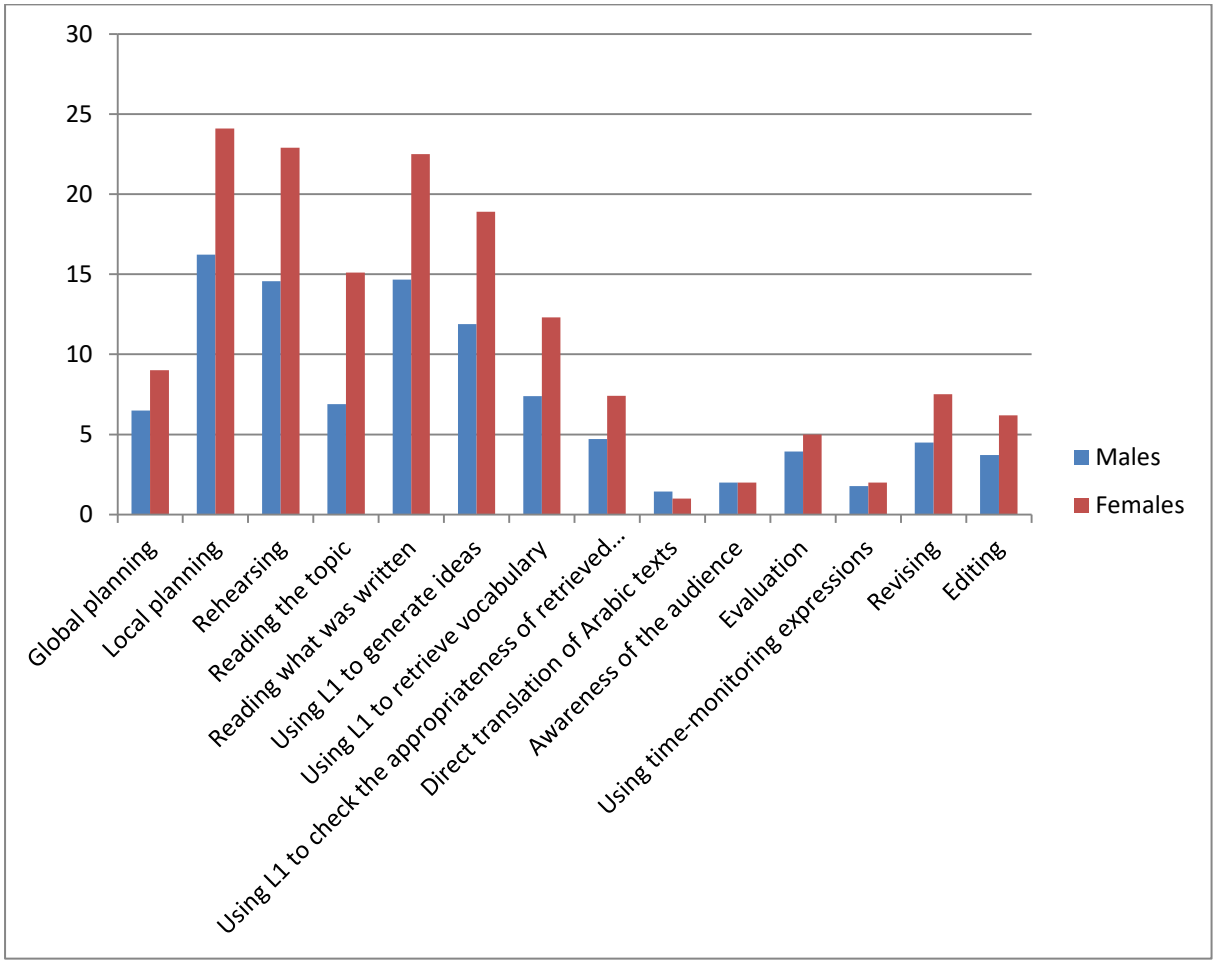

Figure 5.3. Differences in the Use of Writing Strategies by Male and Female Writers.

In order to find out whether these differences were statistically significant, Levene's test of homogeneity of variances and independent samples t-test were conducted. If the null hypothesis of homogeneity of variances is accepted, i.e. if the p-value of the Levene's test is above .05 the "equal variances assumed" value is reported. On the other hand, if the homogeneity of variances is rejected the "equal variances not assumed" value is used. The results are displayed in Table 5.14 below.

Table 5.14

Results OF Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances and T-Test for the Strategies Used by Male and Female Writers

Writing Strategy		**Levene's Test for Equality of Variances**		**T-test for Equality of Means**			
		F	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**
Global planning	Equal variances assumed	.001	.977	-1.291	26	.208	-2.500
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.239	16.599	.233	-2.500
Local planning	Equal variances assumed	.180	.675	-2.418	26	.023	-7.878
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.346	17.130	.031	-7.878
Rehearsing	Equal variances assumed	.000	.987	-6.699	26	.000	-8.344
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.614	18.032	.000	-8.344
Reading the topic	Equal variances assumed	.036	.851	-7.854	26	.000	-8.211
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.921	19.186	.000	-8.211
Reading what was written	Equal variances assumed	4.308	.048	-6.947	26	.000	-7.833
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.819	11.660	.000	-7.833
Using L1 to generate ideas	Equal variances assumed	4.694	.040	-1.954	26	.062	-7.011
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.753	13.792	.102	-7.011
Using L1 to retrieve vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	3.377	.078	-2.214	26	.036	-4.911
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.962	13.359	.071	-4.911
Using L1 to check the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	3.778	.063	-1.632	26	.115	-2.678
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.458	13.647	.167	-2.678
Direct translation of Arabic texts	Equal variances assumed	2.557	.122	.562	26	.579	.444
	Equal variances not assumed			.602	22.627	.553	.444

Writing Strategy		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Awareness of the audience	Equal variances assumed	7.076	.013	.000	26	1.000	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	13.277	1.000	.000
Evaluation	Equal variances assumed	.066	.800	-1.262	26	.218	-1.056
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.310	20.862	.204	-1.056
Using time-monitoring expressions	Equal variances assumed	.190	.666	-.410	26	.685	-.222
	Equal variances not assumed			-.405	18.012	.691	-.222
Revising	Equal variances assumed	.158	.694	-2.088	26	.047	-3.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.942	15.195	.071	-3.000
Editing	Equal variances assumed	1.624	.214	-2.054	26	.050	-2.478
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.865	14.242	.083	-2.478

The table shows that statistically significant differences between males and females were found. Females used local planning more often than males (16.2 vs 24.1; t=-2.42, .023). Rehearsing was also used more frequently by females (M=22.9) compared to males (M=14.6) (t=-6.7, p=.000). Females also use more frequently used the following strategies: reading the topic (6.9 vs 15.1, p=.000), reading what had been written (14.7 vs 22.5, p.000), retrieving vocabulary (7.4 vs 12.3, p=.036) and revising (4.5 vs 7.5, p=.047). To the best of my knowledge, no research has been undertaken to examine the extent to which gender may influence the learners' use of writing strategies in L2. As pointed out earlier in the previous chapter, previous research in the field has either studied only one gender or treated the two genders as one group.

5.4 The processes that the writers went through when composing the L2 essay

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.6), the writing process consists of three parts: prewriting, writing and post-writing. Taking into account the different writing strategies that the participants of the present study employed when carrying out the writing task (Section 5.2 above), the following sections describe how they went through each of these processes.

5.4.1 Prewriting

The first feature that characterises this process is the use of the global planning strategy. Global planning was carried out by 23 participants during the prewriting stage. The length of global planning performed during the prewriting stage varied depending on the participants' writing proficiency and their gender. More specifically, the average time that skilled writers spent on planning was longer than that spent by unskilled ones. In addition, female writers in the current study generally spent more time on planning than their male peers. Table 5.1 above showed the average time recorded for global planning in the

prewriting stage for each participant in this study as well as the total time spent by each of the four groups of participants.

In addition, the writers were observed to use local planning both before beginning to write and during the actual writing process. The application of local planning served as a means through which they provided the details needed to develop their texts and to move from one main theme to the next. This finding is consistent with that of Chaaban (2010), who also found that both her skilled and less skilled Syrian participants used global planning (in the form of outlining at the prewriting stage) and local planning when writing their English essays.

Similarly, rehearsing occurred before the participants began the actual writing. Nonetheless, all of them continued to use this strategy during writing as a way of searching for an appropriate expression or structure, especially when attempting to complete a thought. As with the other writing processes, the use of L1 was also observed by the majority of the writers in this research to generate ideas (See Section 5.2.4)

5.4.2 Writing

Writing, or drafting, happens when individuals translate their verbal thoughts into written sentences and paragraphs. During this process, they focus on expanding, explaining and supporting their thoughts. They also try to establish meaningful connections between their thoughts. Nonetheless, no matter how much planning they carry out, the very act of writing these thoughts down on paper is likely to modify the plan. This is especially so if the selected expressions evoke additional ideas or lead to other implications (El-Aswad, 2002).

One of the most remarkable finding of the present study was the difference in the writing behaviour of the two groups of participants: The skilled and unskilled ones. This finding is in line with that of Sullivan's (2006), who found that proficient writers were able to

use different strategies to cope with the various demands of the writing process. The strategies used by such writers helped them to plan their compositions, generate ideas and monitor and evaluate their writing. The following table presents the average time the participants spent on the writing phase of their English composition.

Table 5.15

The Average Time Spent on Writing during the TAP

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N=14)**														**Unskilled writers (N=14)**													
Gender	**Male (N=9)**									**Female (N=5)**					**Male (N=9)**									**Female (N=5)**				
Participant	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Time (in minutes)	32	41	39	42	33	43	40	38	43	47	49	39	45	50	31	35	32	31	38	17	37	33	34	40	36	39	24	41
Average	39 minutes									46 minutes					32 minutes									36 minutes				
Range	32 – 43 minutes									39 – 50 minutes					17 – 38 minutes									24 – 41 minutes				

Interestingly, it was found that both skilled students and female students spent more time on drafting than their unskilled male and counterparts. In the same vein, recursiveness (i.e. forward and backward movements across the text, characterised by planning, writing and revising different segments of the text) appeared to vary among the participants depending on their writing proficiency. As explained above, the TAP data showed that the skilled writers regularly paused to plan, read, rehearse, and even revise their texts before they would continue with their writing. In other words, "they were not bound by ideas they had already written down. Rather they would often add new ideas and restructure old ones on evaluating them" (Victori, 1999, p. 550).

In contrast, the writing process of the unskilled writers seemed to be less recursive, as they did less planning, reading and rehearsing than the skilled writers. Also, as discussed in the revising section below, the former group was more concerned with examining the surface structure of the text they had produced than with organising the thoughts or elaborating on them. This finding confirms that of Zamel (1983) who also found that the less proficient writers in her study were more occupied with minor issues and grammatical accuracy than the proficient ones. The latter group was more concerned with producing and organising ideas than with the superficial structure of their texts.

Further, the writers were observed to use local planning both before beginning to write and during the actual writing. The application of local planning served as a means through which they provided the details needed to develop their texts and to move from one main theme to the next.

As pointed out in Section 5.2 above, the following strategies were used by the participants in the writing stage: local planning, rehearsing, reading, using L1, awareness of the audience, evaluation, time monitoring, revising and editing. It was also noted that the use

of the negative evaluation strategy was immediately followed by applying the revising or editing strategies to revise the content or the form and amend it accordingly.

5.4.3 Post-writing

Most EFL writers go through this process of writing in which they make judgements about their compositions (Perl, 1979; Raimes, 1987, Sasaki, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). Table 5.16 below shows the average time spent on the post writing stage for each participant in the present study as well as the total time for each of the four groups of participants.

Table 5.16

Time Spent on the Post Writing Stage

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N=14)**														**Unskilled writers (N=14)**													
Gender	**Male (N=9)**									**Female (N=5)**					**Male (N=9)**									**Female (N=5)**				
Participant	S M1	S M2	S M3	S M4	S M5	S M6	S M7	S M8	S M9	SF 1	SF 2	SF 3	SF 4	SF 5	U M1	U M2	U M3	U M4	U M5	U M6	U M7	U M8	U M9	UF 1	UF 2	UF 3	UF 4	UF 5
Time (in minutes)	6	0	6	4	3	4	7	7	8	5	10	8	8	9	11	0	8	7	10	8	9	0	10	8	12	11	10	0
Average	5 minutes									8 minutes					7 minutes									8.2 minutes				
Range	0 – 8 minutes									5 – 10 minutes					0 – 11 minutes									0 – 12 minutes				

As discussed in Section 5.2 above, the noteworthy strategies used by the writers in this stage were local planning, rehearsing, reading, using L1, revising and editing (See Appendix J for examples of how these strategies were employed).

5.5 A tentative writing model of the participants in this research

As discussed in Chapter 2, in order to investigate the composing processes and strategies of the writers in this research, the analysis of the TAPs was guided by Flower and Hayes' (1980) model. Flower and Hayes (1981) point out that "the act of writing involves three major elements which are reflected in the three units of the model: the task environment, the writer's long-term memory, and the writing processes" (p. 369). In this study, these three parts were found to interact constantly with each other throughout the writing process. The task environment consisted of two elements: the rhetorical problem, which included the writing topic "Write an English essay to describe your childhood and compare it with your life now", and the possible audience (in this case, the researcher). The second part of the model was the writer's LTM, which refers to the knowledge retrieved from the LTM when carrying out the composing process, such as knowledge of the topic (childhood vs life now), the genre (descriptive), audience (the researcher), writing plans (what to include in the text), writing processes (how to go about generating the text), writing strategies (the techniques employed to facilitate writing) and rhetorical problems (e.g. grammatical rules and word choice). A noteworthy element of the writers' LTM, which was not present in Flower and Hayes' (1980) model, was knowledge of L2. As discussed in Section 5.3.1 above, this element was found to play a significant role in the length and recursiveness of the three writing processes as well as the utilisation of certain writing strategies by the participants in this research. The third part of the model was the writing

processes that the writers went through when composing the L2 essay. These writing processes were:

A. Pre-writing, which included setting goals, generating ideas and organising those ideas. As pointed out in Section 5.4.1 above, the strategies used by the writers during this process were global planning, local planning, rehearsing and using L1.

B. Writing, when the writers translated their verbal thoughts into written expressions. During this process, they focused on expanding, explaining and supporting their thoughts. As explained in Section 5.4.2 above, the following strategies were used by the participants in the writing stage: local planning, rehearsing, reading, using L1, awareness of the audience, evaluation, time monitoring, revising and editing.

C. Post-writing, most of the writers went through this process, in which they made judgements about their compositions and made the necessary amendments accordingly (see Section 5.4.3). The noteworthy strategies used by the writers in this stage were local planning, rehearsing, reading, using L1, revising and editing.

In support of Flower and Hayes' (1981) suggestion, these processes were found to be controlled by a monitor, which determined when writers needed to proceed from one process to another. A significant finding in this research was that this monitor largely depended on the writers' proficiency. As pointed out in Section 5.4 above, skilled writers were found to spend more time on all three writing processes than their unskilled peers.

In light of Flower and Hayes' (1981) model and the findings of this research, the following model was proposed to describe the composing process of the writers in this study. The double-headed arrows indicate that the writers followed a recursive pattern in which they moved forward and backword between the three writing processes, and that the two elements of task environment and writer's LTM were present throughout the composing act.

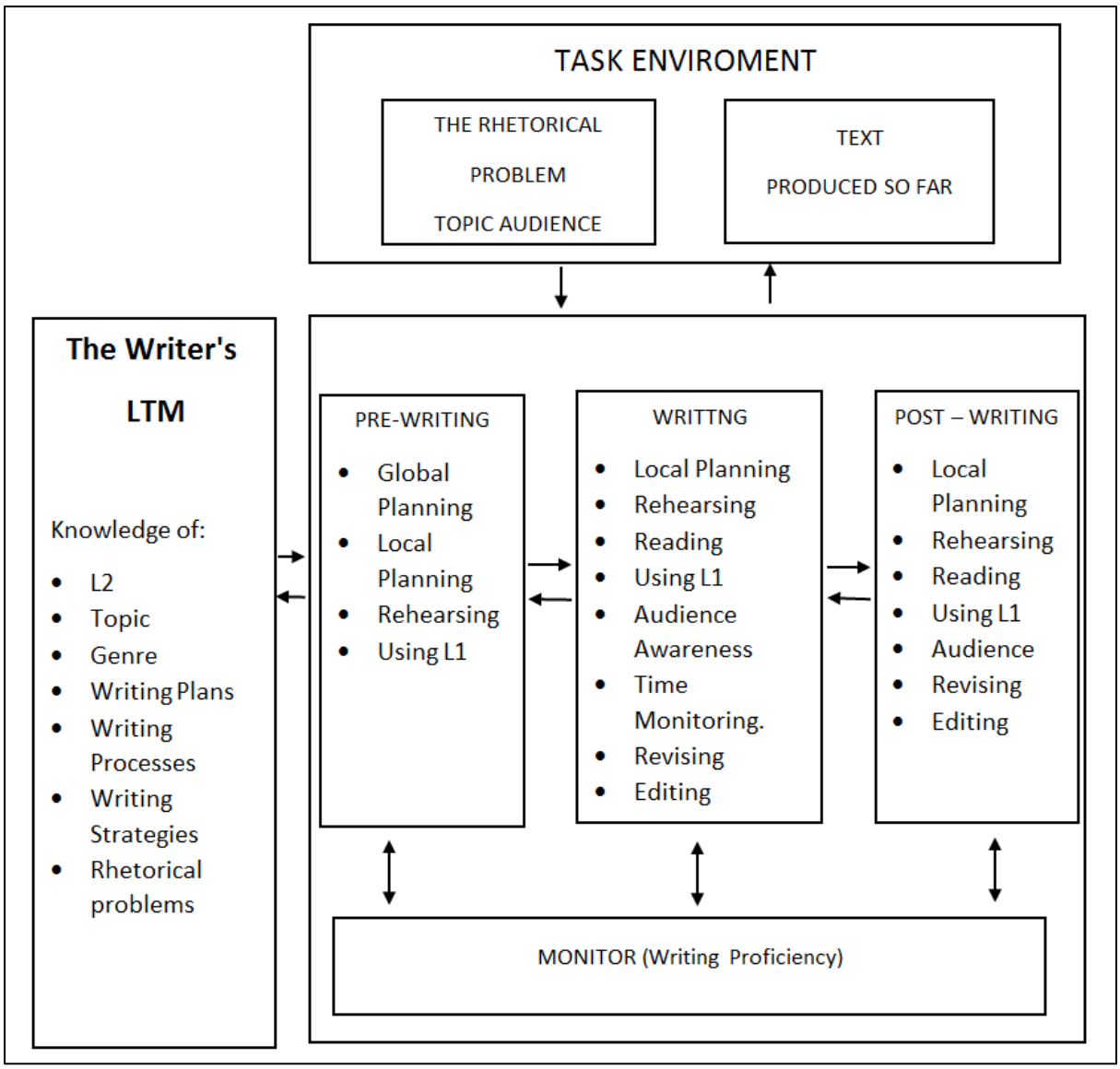

Figure 5.4. A Tentative Composing Model of the Writers in this research.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the writing strategies that were frequently used by the participants in this study during the different stages of the composing process were discussed. Interestingly, most of these strategies were found to be also employed by the majority of Arab EFL writers. They too used these as a means to facilitate the process of writing. However, one strategy, using time-monitoring expressions, that was utilised by the writers in this research was not reported in previous studies conducted on Arab EFL writers. In the following chapter, I shall discuss the grammatical features that were found to be the most challenging to the writers in this study.

Chapter 6: Results and Discussion of the Major Linguistic Challenges that Saudi Learners Encounter When Composing in English (Research Question 2)

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the writing strategies that were frequently used by the participants of this research during the different stages of the writing process were discussed. In order to answer the second research question posed in this study, this chapter aims to examine the major linguistic errors made by the writers. The main objective is to investigate whether interference from the writers' native-language (Arabic) linguistic features could be considered a possible cause of the errors found in their English writing. The chapter also compares the performance of the four groups included in this research: skilled vs unskilled and male vs female writers, and then closely examines the challenges encountered by four writers from each of these groups.

As pointed out in Chapter 3, the majority of the linguistic errors found in the student's essays were reported by previous research in the field. These were categorised as errors in: subject-verb agreement, verb tense, modal verbs, articles, prepositions, word order and punctuation. However, one of the errors that the writers made, which was subject-verb order in verb phrases (discussed in Section 6.2.4.1 below), was not reported by previous studies on Arab EFL writers. Further, to the best of my knowledge, no research has been undertaken to examine the extent to which gender may influence the learners' use or misuse of certain linguistic categories when writing in an L2. Previous research in the field has either studied only one gender or treated the two genders as one group.

6.2 The major linguistic challenges that Saudi writers encounter

in order to obtain an overview of the linguistic challenges that Saudi writers faced when writing in the English language, Figure 6.1 below presents the types of errors they made and the frequency of commission of these errors.

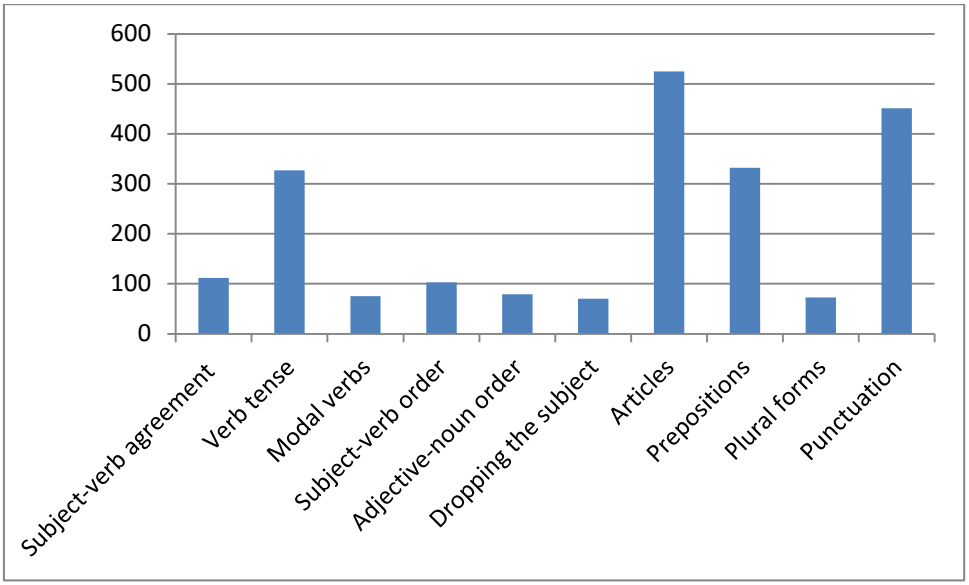

Figure 6.1 The types and frequencies of the linguistic errors made by the writers

The use of articles was the most problematic category to the participants in this research (525 errors). The other challenging categories were punctuation (451 errors), prepositions (332 errors) and verb tense (327 errors). These were followed by subject-verb agreement (112 errors) and subject-verb order in verb phrases (103 errors). Next, similar frequencies were obtained for the errors made in the categories of adjective-noun order in noun phrases (79 errors), modal verbs (75 errors), plural forms (73 errors) and dropping the subject in verb phrases (70 errors). This could possibly indicate that these four categories were equally challenging to the writers.

It is also important to note that the participants in this research were found to make other linguistic errors. These errors fell in the two semantic categories of word choice and

missing word. Since this research focused on examining the grammatical and punctuation errors that the writers made, semantic categories were considered out of the scope of this research. In the following sections, I discuss each of the major linguistic challenges mentioned in the previous paragraph and attempt to orientate the findings of this research within the broader literature.

6.2.1 Subject-verb agreement

As discussed in Chapter 3, in English verbs agree with their subjects in person and in number. A singular subject takes a singular verb, whereas a plural subject takes a plural verb. On the other hand, Arabic verbs are not inflected for number, and hence, a large number of errors were found in the writers' essays. For example, Participant UM3 (an unskilled male) wrote:

*1. They was saying I should become a doctor.

Another example from Participant UM9's essay (an unskilled male) was:

*2. He and me goes there every week.

Other writers overgeneralised the rule and produced sentences like:

*3. I likes to study more now (Participant UF2).

*4. These things helps me decide to have a good job (Participant UF5).

When the above writers were interviewed about these errors, they agreed that subject-verb agreement was challenging for them. Participant UM3, for example, mentioned that his errors were due to lack of mastery of this linguistic feature: "It is really confusing to me. I remember studying this long time ago at school, but it is just so difficult to apply in actual

writing. I just cannot use it correctly". Participant UF5 attributed her errors to interference of the linguistic features of her L1: "What to do! It is completely the opposite in Arabic. It is like a puzzle ... I mean to constantly think about whether to add or remove those endings when writing English sentences."

Subject-verb agreement errors were also reported by previous studies on Arab EFL writers (reviewed in Chapter 3) such as Al-Sindy (1994), Aljamhoor (1996), Elaswad (2002) and Alharthi (2012). Such studies have found that subject-verb agreement was particularly challenging to the participants. Al-Sindy's (1994) study, for example, categorised subject-verb agreement errors made by his writers into two types. The first one was the omission of the third-person singular marker (similar to examples 2-4 above), and the second one was errors in subject-verb agreement when using auxiliary and copular verbs (similar to example 1 above). Aljamhoor (1996) explained such findings by pointing out that the writers in his research "recalled that they were attempting to adopt many linguistic rules from Arabic grammar and to match them with English." Similarly, and in line with the results of this research, Elaswad (2002) found that his Libyan participants made agreement errors by either using a plural verb with a singular subject (e.g. our classroom are not big enough) or using a singular verb with a plural subject (e.g. some of them was very good). These findings were also consistent with those of Alharthi's (2012) study on Saudi writers. The researcher stated that absence of subject–verb agreement was found in most of his participants' essays. Table 6.1 below shows the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.1

The Average Number of Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

Writing proficiency	Skilled writers (N = 14)														Unskilled writers (N = 14)													
Gender	Male writers (N = 9)									Female writers (N = 5)					Male writers (N = 9)									Female writers (N = 5)				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	1	2	0	1	2	1	0	4	4	11	8	4	7	8	8	9	4	9	3	9	10
Range	0-2									0-2					4-11									3-10				
Average number of errors	1.1									0.8					7									7				
Subtotal	10									4					63									35				
total	112																											

The table above shows that the unskilled writers made more errors in the use of subject-verb agreement than the skilled ones. Interestingly, male and female participants were found to make a similar number of errors in each category (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

6.2.2 Verb tense

Tense usage was also observed to be problematic to the participants when writing in English. One of the main difficulties they encountered was in employing the correct sequence of tenses when writing complex sentences, which negatively affected the comprehensibility of their essays. For example, Participant UM1wrote:

*1. I liked to play football. I also enjoy going to the beach. My favourite hobby was swimming.

In this example, we can see that the participant failed to maintain the tense sequence that could facilitate the understanding of the text. He started the first sentence with a past tense verb (I liked). Then he started the next sentence with a simple present verb (I enjoy). In the third sentence, he returned to the simple past tense (I was).

Other participants left a few verbs without any tense inflections. Participant UM3, for instance wrote:

*2. I play there a lot. He say why I play a lot and not study.

Differentiating between the past simple and present perfect tenses was also challenging to the participants. For example, Participant UF3 wrote:

*3. I have learned French five years ago. I recently started learning Japanese.

The following table shows the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.2

The Average Number of Errors in Verb Tense

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**		**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**	
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**
Average number of errors in the sequence of tenses	0.9	1.4	6	5
Subtotal	8	7	54	25
total	94			
Average number of errors in no tense inflections	1	1	7	8
Subtotal	9	5	63	40
total	117			
Average number of errors in the use of past simple & present prefect	0.9	1.2	8	6
Subtotal	8	6	72	30
total	116			
Grand total	327			

The following table shows the breakdown of the errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.3

The Breakdown of the Errors in Verb Tense

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	4	3	4	4	0	3	3	4	0	3	4	4	3	4	25	17	25	19	21	23	23	17	19	21	18	22	15	19
Range	0 – 4									3 – 4					17 – 25									15 – 22				
Average	2.8									3.6					21									19				
total number of errors for each group	25									18					189									95				

It is apparent from the tables above that the unskilled writers made more errors in the use of verb tenses than the skilled ones. Interestingly, male and female participants were found to make a similar number of errors in each category (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

When the writers were interviewed about the above challenges, a few of them stated that the difficulty was due to the fact that the tense systems in Arabic and English are different, and hence they found that confusing (e.g. Participant UF3). Other learners mentioned that they needed more practice with the use of the different tenses in different contexts before they could use them correctly in English texts (e.g. Participants UM1 and UM3). These findings are consistent with those of previous studies reviewed in Chapter 3, such as Qafisheh's (1997), Al-Sindy's (1994), Al-Hazaymeh's (1994) and El-Aswad's (2002), all of whom reported that verb tense was a challenging grammatical aspect to master English writing. Al-Sindy (1994), for example, indicated that such difficulty could be attributed to the fact that the Arabic tense system is completely different from English. Al-Hazaymeh (1994) further argued that the complex nature of the English verb tense, lack of knowledge of L2 grammatical rules and overgeneralisation could be a source of this particular challenge.

6.2.3. Modal verbs

Using modal verbs was found to be challenging to the writers in this study, especially the unskilled ones, as the following examples show:

*1. He said I might finish my studies or no playing with friends (Participant UF2).

When asked in the stimulated recalls about the reasons the use of modal verbs was problematic, most writers thought that in some contexts there were only subtle differences between the meanings of some modal verbs, which made the learners unable to select the appropriate modal verb (Participants SF4 and UF2). Other participants were found to unnecessarily combine a modal auxiliary with the preposition 'to':

*2. I should to eat my dinner by 8pm (Participant UM3).

In the stimulated recalls, Participant UM3 pointed out that he used the Arabic translation of 'should eat' (يجب أن), in which should must be followed by 'to' (أن) in Arabic. There were yet other writers used two modals together in the same sentence.

*3. I will can drive (instead of 'I will be able to drive) (Participant SF4).

It could be inferred that the above participants were not able to successfully apply the rules of English grammar they had studied to their writing. This finding emphasises the importance of raising the writers' awareness of the unique linguistic features of English and the differences between them and those of Arabic (See Chapter 8 for the implication of the finding for English writing instruction). This finding is consistent with those of Aijmer (2002), El-Aswad (2002), Hinkel (2011) and Azzouz (2013) (reviewed in Chapter 3), which showed that EFL writers encountered difficulties with the use of modal verbs when writing in English. However, to the best of my knowledge, no similar research has attempted to investigate the use of modal verbs by Saudi EFL writers. This study therefore attempts to fill this void in the literature. The following table shows the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.4

The Average Number of Errors in Modal Verbs

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	2	1	0	0	1	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	2	1	5	2	5	2	2	5	5	4	6	5	8	3	4	5
Range	0 – 2									0 – 2					2 – 6									3 – 8				
Average number of errors	1									1					4									5				
Subtotal	9									5					36									25				
total	75																											

The table above shows that the unskilled writers made more errors in the use of modal verbs than the skilled ones. Interestingly, male and female participants were found to make a similar number of errors in each category (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

6.2.4 Word order

As discussed in Chapter 3, the subject in Arabic verb phrases follows the verb, whereas it precedes the verb in English verb phrases. In addition, the adjective in Arabic follows the noun, whereas the adjective in English precedes the noun. These differences posed challenges to the writers in this research, especially the unskilled writers. This was due to either their insufficient knowledge of the English language structure (as reported by 41% of them in the stimulated recalls) or due to the negative transfer of Arabic word order (reported by 59% of them in the stimulated recalls). In the following sections I discuss the challenges that the participants in this study faced with each of these word orders.

6.2.4.1 Subject-verb order in verb phrases

As pointed out in Chapter 3, sentence order is an important aspect of the linguistic knowledge that writers need to possess. Arabic is a VSO (verb-subject-object) language. That is, basic Arabic sentences start with a verb followed by a subject and then an object (if the verb is transitive). English, on the other hand, is SVO language. Consequently, basic English sentences start with a subject followed by a verb and then an object (if one is needed). An investigation of the participants' TAPs and written products revealed that the unskilled writers sometimes used the Arabic sentence order instead of the English one. The following examples show some of the errors in subject-verb order that were found in the participants' essays:

*1. Played they a lot in the parks (Participant UM7).

*2. Finished I homework first and went there (Participant UF3).

Such sentences could have resulted from the use of a direct translation of the Arabic sentence pattern instead of using the English one, as pointed out by 71 percent of the unskilled writers in the stimulated recalls. Table 6.5 below presents the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.5

The Average Number of Errors in Subject-Verb Order

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	5	8	6	6	9	10	6	7	9	7	10	5	9
Range	---									---					5 – 10									5 – 10				
Average number of errors	0									0					7									8				
Subtotal	0									0					63									40				
total	103																											

Interestingly, this type of error was not found in the essays of the skilled writers. With regard to the unskilled ones, both male and female writers committed a similar number of errors in this category (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers). Interestingly, to the best of my knowledge, this kind of error was not reported by previous studies on Arab learners of EFL.

6.2.4.2 Adjective-noun order in noun phrases

In this section, I will proceed to discuss the adjective-noun order in noun phrases which was found to be problematic to the writers. As discussed in Chapter 3, the structure of noun phrases in English requires that adjectives precede the nouns they qualify. On the other hand, adjectives in Arabic follow the nouns they modify, and they are also required to agree in number and gender with the nouns. Examples of the errors the participants made in this category were:

*1. It was a game interesting (Participant UM8).

*2. We lived in a house big and beautiful (Participant UF2).

Interestingly, this finding is consistent with those of similar studies undertaken in relation to the writing of Arab EFL learners. For instance, poor Saudi writers in Al-Sindy's (1994) study were reported to face challenges with the adjective-noun order when writing in English. Al-Sindy argued that these errors could be attributed to the differences between English and Arabic. Alharthi's (2012) study also showed that word order is one of the most common errors among Saudi writers at tertiary level. He argued that some of these errors that appeared in the writers' writing were transferred from L1 (Arabic) where the convention is for adjectives to follow nouns. In the same vein, Azzouz's (2013) research indicated that

Arab writers appeared to make errors in adjective-noun order when writing in English, and he argued that this error could be attributed to either the interference of L1 (Arabic) structure or perhaps the lack of knowledge of the grammatical system of L2 (English). Table 6.6 below shows the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.6

The Average Number of Errors in the Adjective-Noun Order

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**												
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	0	2	0	1	0	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	6	5	3	4	5	6	3	7	6	4	6	3	4	3
Range	0 – 2									0 – 2					3 – 7									3 – 6				
Average number of errors	1									1					5									4				
Subtotal	9									5					45									20				
total	79																											

The table shows that unskilled writers made more errors in the adjective-noun order than the skilled writers. The unskilled male writers were found to make the same type of error as their female peers, yet the former group produced them more frequently than the latter group (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

6.2.5 Dropping the subject

As pointed out in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.5), Arabic is a pro-drop language, in which the subject of a clause may be suppressed. This is different from English where affirmative sentences must begin with a subject. This was found to be challenging to the unskilled writers in this study. Herein below, are a few examples in where the subject was dropped in the participants' essays:

*1. Went to public school (Participant UM1).

*2. Liked computer games (Participant UF1).

The subjects 'I' and 'we', respectively, were deleted from the above sentences as a possible result of the interference of the Arabic sentence structure. Al-Sindy (1994) also reported that his unskilled Saudi participants sometimes omitted the subject pronouns when writing in English, and he explained that "It is because they are implied in verbs, as explained above. It would be redundant to use them according to Arabic. Certainly, these errors are due to mother-tongue interference" (p. 82). Similarly, Azzouz (2013) found that his Syrian participants tended to omit subjects when writing in English. The following table shows the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.7

The Average Number of Errors in Dropping the Subject

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	6	4	5	7	7	6	3	4	6	3	3	6
Range	0 – 1									---					3 – 7									3 – 6				
Average number of errors	0.2									0					5.1									4.4				
Subtotal	2									0					46									22				
total	70																											

The results particularised in the table show that the unskilled writers made more errors in the adjective-noun order than the skilled ones. In addition, those errors were found to be more frequent among the male writers in comparison to their female counterparts (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

6.2.6 Articles

The use of articles was also found to be problematic to the participants in this research when writing in English, especially the unskilled ones. The differences between the use of articles in Arabic and English discussed in Chapter 3 could be a possible cause of such difficulty. As Aljamhoor (1996) puts it, "The participants were not aware of the differences between the two systems, so they might apply their previous knowledge [of Arabic] when they started learning English." I have classified the errors found in the writers' essays in the present study into the following five categories:

A. Dropping the definite article.

*1. I decided to join ∅ English Department (Participant UM3).

B. Dropping an indefinite article.

*2. When I read ∅ book the first time, I was very happy (Participant UM4).

C. Replacing the definite article by an indefinite one.

*3. It was an only school in our street (Participant UM7).

D. Replacing an indefinite article by the definite one.

*4. Medicine is the important major (Participant UF4).

E. Using an unnecessary article.

*5. The Saudi Arabia is a big country (Participant UF5).

Table 6.8 below presents the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.8

The Average Number of Errors in the Use of Articles

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**		**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**	
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**
Average number of errors in dropping the definite article	0.9	0	6	7
Subtotal	8	0	54	35
total	97			
Average number of errors in dropping an indefinite article	0	0.8	9	8
Subtotal	0	4	81	40
total	126			
Average number of errors in replacing the definite article by an indefinite one	1	0.6	7	6
Subtotal	9	3	63	30

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**		**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**	
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**
total	107			
Average number of errors in replacing an indefinite article by the definite one	0	1	8	7
Subtotal	0	5	72	35
total	112			
Using an unnecessary article	1.1	0	5	6
Subtotal	10	0	45	30
total	88			
Grand total	525			

The following table shows the breakdown of the errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.9

The Breakdown of the Errors in the Use of Articles

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	3	4	1	4	0	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	0	32	38	39	37	34	29	38	36	32	36	28	33	36	37
Range	0 – 4									0 – 4					29 – 39									28 – 37				
Average	3									2.4					35									34				
total number of errors for each group	27									12					315									170				

The results from this table show once more, that the unskilled writers made more errors in the use of articles than the skilled writers. In addition, these errors were generally more common to the male writers than with their female peers (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

. Table 6.8 also shows that the writers made more errors in the category of *dropping an indefinite article* followed by *replacing an indefinite article by the definite one*. That was followed by the two categories of *replacing the definite article by an indefinite one* and *dropping the definite article*. That was followed by *using an unnecessary article*. Errors in the use of the definite and indefinite articles by Saudi writers were also reported by Alhaysony (2012), who attributed that omission errors to "the fact that the definite article is used more widely in the Arabic language than in English" (p. 55). Azzouz's (2013) study also showed that errors in the use of article were ones of the most recurring errors among Arab EFL writers. These findings were also confirmed by the participants' responses in the stimulated recalls. Participant UM12 explained: "In my opinion, articles in English are very confusing. There are a lot of complicated rules. It seems like every group of nouns follows a different pattern." Participant UF7 also pointed out that "sometimes we need to use *a*, *an* or *the* while other times no article should be used at all! What a puzzle. I believe Arabic is more simple in this regard, as we only have two choices *the* or no article."

6.2.7 Prepositions

Prepositions pose a great challenge for Arabic-speaking writers when writing in English. Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) suggest two key reasons for that struggle: "complexity of the prepositional system itself in each language" and the fact that "each preposition can indicate several different relations" (p. 76). For instance, the preposition *at* is used in English to designate place, time, speed, distance, and so on. Thus, when unskilled writers are not

certain about what preposition should be used to express an idea, they often compare the sentence with its Arabic equivalent and translate the Arabic preposition directly into an English one. This is likely to obscure the intended meaning or change it completely.

As pointed out in Chapter 3, there is no one-to-one correspondence between the prepositions used in the English and Arabic languages. Consequently, errors occur when Arab learners of English attempt to use their linguistic knowledge of their L1 when writing in English and translate the forms directly into the English language. This is exactly what was observed in the essays of the participants of the present study, as the following examples show:

*1. We did not use to sit on tables when eating (Participant UM1).
(The preposition used after the verb 'sit' in Arabic is 'on').

*2. I admired by the teacher who was very kind (Participant UM7).
(In Arabic, a preposition is needed after the verb 'admire'.)

*3. I shook hands my friends (Participant UF5).
(No preposition is used after 'shook hands' in Arabic.)

Consistently, Al-Sindy's (1994) study showed that preposition errors identified in his Saudi writers' writing were caused by the improper use, dropping or insertion of prepositions. Similarly, El-Aswad (2002) and Alharthi (2012) also found that most of their Arab EFL writers made considerable errors in the use of prepositions. Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) suggested that the challenges in the use of prepositions faced by Arab writers when writing in English could be attributed to the complex nature of the preposition system. Tahaineh (2010)

further explained that L1 interference was responsible for 58% of preposition errors that the writers made when writing in English. Furthermore, 42 percent of the errors were attributed to the L2 structure. The stimulated recalls confirmed this finding as almost half of the writers (47%) attributed the errors they made in this category to the complex nature of the preposition system, while the other half (53%) thought that the differences between English and Arabic prepositions caused that confusion. Table 6.10 below shows the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.10

The Average Number of Errors in the Use of Prepositions

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**		**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**	
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**
Average number of errors in using a wrong preposition	0.7	0.8	9	8
Subtotal	6	4	81	40
total	131			
Average number of errors in adding an unnecessary preposition	0	0	6	7
Subtotal	0	0	54	35
total	89			

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**		**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**	
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**
Average number of errors in dropping a necessary preposition	0.8	0.6	8	6
Subtotal	7	3	72	30
total	112			
Grand total	332			

The following table shows the breakdown of the errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.11

The Breakdown of the Errors in the Use of Prepositions

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	2	1	0	3	0	1	1	2	3	3	1	0	2	1	27	20	23	23	21	24	29	20	20	19	20	22	21	23
Range	0 – 3									0 – 3					20 – 29									19 – 23				
Average	1.4									1.4					23									21				
total number of errors for each group	13									7					207									105				

Once again, we are able to conclude from the results in the table that the unskilled writers made more errors in the use of prepositions than the skilled writers. Interestingly, unskilled male participants made more errors in the categories of *using a wrong preposition* and *dropping a necessary preposition* than their female peers. On the other hand, female writers made more errors in the category of *adding an unnecessary preposition*. To the best of my knowledge, no research has been undertaken to examine the extent to which gender may influence the learners' use or misuse of certain linguistic categories when writing in L2. Previous research in the field has either studied only one gender or treated the two genders as one group (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

6.2.8 Plural forms

The use of plural forms of nouns, especially irregular ones, was found to be problematic to the unskilled writers in the present study. Below are a few examples in which wrong forms of plurals were used by the participants:

*1. There were eight childs in my family (Participant UM2).

*2. I wanted to be like strong womans (Participant UF2).

El-Aswad (2002) explains that the challenges that Arab learners experience with the use of plural forms in English writing could be attributed to the fact that it is not easy to decide whether irregular words in English are singular or plural. He points out that some words in English end with letter (s) as if they were plural; however, they are treated as singular forms in English. Azzouz (2013) study also reported that his participants made errors in the use of the plural form, and he attributed some of these errors to the negative

interference of L1. Interestingly, the majority of the interviewees (68%) in my research attributed their errors in this category to the confusion that irregular plural forms cause them, especially those with no Arabic equivalents. The following table shows the average number of errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.12

The Average Number of Errors in the Use of Plural Forms

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	5	3	3	6	3	6	7	4	7	5	7	3	6
Range	0 – 1									---					3 – 7									3 – 7				
Average number of errors	0.2									0					4.8									5.6				
Subtotal	2									0					43									28				
total	73																											

The results detailed in this table show that the unskilled writers made more errors in the use of punctuation than the skilled writers. On the other hand, the differences in the errors made by male and female writers appear to be marginal (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

6.2.9 Punctuation

The analysis of the participants' English essays revealed that a large number of them (especially the unskilled ones) used incorrect punctuation marks or omitted necessary punctuation marks. When asked about the reasons for their incorrect use of English punctuation, the majority of the interviewees (75%) were surprised that punctuation was so important and influential in writing. They did not think it was a serious issue like grammar or sentence structure, and therefore, they did not pay considerable attention to it. The errors in the use of punctuation that were found in the participants' essays could be grouped in the following categories:

A. The use of capital letters:

*1. I liked them. they were so nice to me (Participant UM1).

(A lower case was used instead of a capital letter.)

*2. My best friend's Name was Ali (Participant UM4).

(A capital letter was used instead of a lower case.)

B. The use of periods:

*3. It was a nice place We went there every Friday (Participant UM8).

(The period was dropped.)

C. The use of commas:

*4. My favourite sports were football basketball and swimming (Participant UF1).

(The comma was dropped.)

D. The use of semicolons:

*5. My father wanted to live in Riyadh, I preferred Dammam (Participant UF2).

(A comma was used instead of a semicolon.)

The findings of the current research are in line with the findings of previous studies reviewed in Chapter 3, all of which found that that Arab EFL students encounter challenges in the use of punctuation when writing in English. Some of these previous findings were from the studies conducted by El-Aswad (2002), Labidi (1992), Qaddumi (1995), Al-Semari (1993) and Fageeh (2003). Labidi (1992), for example, points out that the poor mastery of punctuation in English could be attributed to interference of L1 (Arabic) since it is neither widely used nor adequately taught, which consequently resulted in the omission of punctuation in English. Qaddumi (1995) also found that the misuse of punctuation among Arab students' writing in English to be one of the factors affecting their writing coherence. Further, Fageeh's (2003) study indicated that Saudi students seemed unaware of the punctuation rules. They encountered difficulty in deciding how to use the most appropriate punctuation when engaged in a composing task. Fageeh argued that Saudi students need considerable help from their teachers in order to teach them the nature of punctuation and to provide then with handouts that included some practical examples showing how various punctuation marks/symbols are used. The average number of errors made by each group of participants is presented in Table 6.10 below.

Table 6.13

The Average Number of Errors in the Use of Punctuation

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**		**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**	
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**
Average number of errors in using a lower case instead of a capital letter	0	1	5	4
Subtotal	0	5	45	20
total	70			
Average number of errors in using a capital instead of a lower case letter	0	0.6	4	3
Subtotal	0	3	36	15
total	54			
Average number of errors in dropping a period	1	0	3.2	3.4
Subtotal	9	0	29	17
total	55			
Average number of errors in using a comma instead of a period	0	0	4	4
Subtotal	0	0	36	20
total	56			
Average number of errors in dropping a comma	0.8	1	5	3
Subtotal	7	5	45	15
total	72			
Average number of errors in using a period instead of a comma	0.7	0.6	4	2
Subtotal	6	3	36	10
total	55			

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**		**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**	
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**	**Male writers (N = 9)**	**Female writers (N = 5)**
Average number of errors in dropping a semicolon	0	1	2	2.2
Subtotal	0	5	18	11
total	34			
Using a period instead of a semicolon	0	0	2.4	2
Subtotal	0	0	22	10
total	32			
Average number of errors in using a comma instead of a semicolon	0.8	0	1.2	1
Subtotal	7	0	11	5
total	23			
Grand total	451			

The following table shows the breakdown of the errors made by each group of participants.

Table 6.14

The Breakdown of the Errors in the Use of Punctuation

Writing proficiency	**Skilled writers (N = 14)**														**Unskilled writers (N = 14)**													
Gender	**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**					**Male writers (N = 9)**									**Female writers (N = 5)**				
Participant's code	SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5	SM6	SM7	SM8	SM9	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5	UM1	UM2	UM3	UM4	UM5	UM6	UM7	UM8	UM9	UF1	UF2	UF3	UF4	UF5
Number of errors	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	5	4	4	3	5	34	30	28	34	29	28	31	34	30	29	27	23	23	21
Range	2 – 4									3 – 5					28 – 34									21 – 29				
Average	3.2									4.2					30.9									24.6				
total number of errors for each group	29									21					278									123				

From the results in this table, we note that the unskilled writers made more errors in the use of punctuation than the skilled writers. In addition, while the average number of errors was higher among skilled female writers than among their male counterparts, it was lower among unskilled female writers than among their male peers (See Section 6.3 for a discussion of the differences between these groups of writers).

6.3 Comparing the linguistic challenges encountered by the different groups of writers

In the following sections, I shall explain why the errors were made by each of the four groups studied in this research: skilled vs unskilled and male vs female writers.

6.3.1 The linguistic challenges encountered by skilled vs. less skilled writers

The non-parametric test Mann-Whitney test, equivalent to the independent samples t-test, was used to compare the linguistic challenges encountered by skilled writers (n=14) and unskilled writers (n=14) since the distribution of the errors contained many zeros, and therefore they were not normally distributed. Table 6.15 below presents the mean and standard deviation of each error for each group.

Table 6.15

Mean and Standard Deviation of Linguistic Errors Made by Skilled and Unskilled Writers

Linguistic category	**Writing proficiency**	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**
Subject-verb agreement	Skilled	1.00	.877
	Unskilled	7.00	2.660
Verb tense	Skilled	3.07	1.385
	Unskilled	20.29	3.074

Linguistic category	Writing proficiency	Mean	Standard deviation
Modal verbs	Skilled	1.00	.784
	Unskilled	4.36	1.692
Adjective-noun order in noun phrases	Skilled	1.00	.784
	Unskilled	4.64	1.393
Subject-verb order in verb phrases	Skilled	.00	.000
	Unskilled	7.36	1.781
Dropping the subject in verb phrases	Skilled	.14	.363
	Unskilled	4.86	1.512
Articles	Skilled	2.79	1.477
	Unskilled	34.64	3.411
Prepositions	Skilled	1.43	1.089
	Unskilled	22.29	2.867
Plural forms	Skilled	.14	.363
	Unskilled	5.07	1.592
Punctuation	Skilled	3.57	.938
	Unskilled	28.64	4.125

The unskilled writers made an overwhelming number of errors in comparison to skilled writers. This is typical for each type of error, where the average attached to the unskilled group was much larger than it was for the skilled group. These differences are represented in Figure 6.2 below.

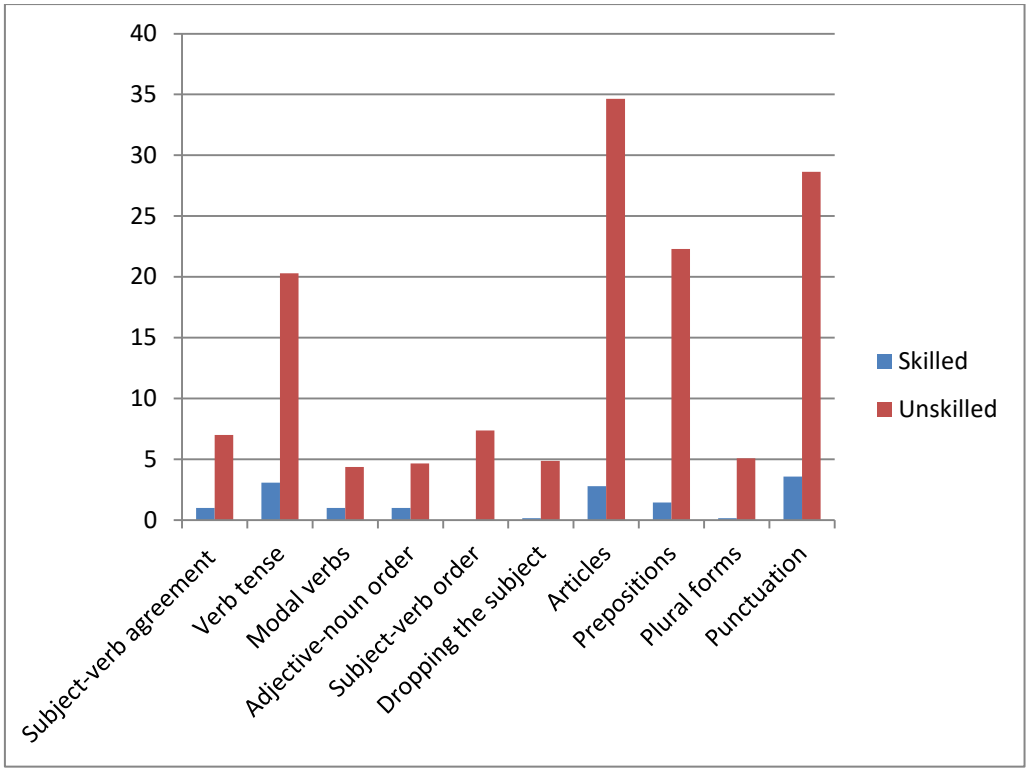

Figure 6.2. Differences in the Linguistic Errors Made by Skilled and Unskilled Writers.

In order to find out whether these differences were statistically significant, Mann-Whitney tests were conducted. The results are displayed in Table 6.16 below.

Table 6.16

Mann-Whitney Ranks of Linguistic Errors Made by Skilled and Unskilled Writers

Linguistic category	**Writing proficiency**	**Mean Rank**	**Sum of Ranks**
Subject-verb agreement	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00
Verb tense	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00
Modal verbs	Skilled	7.93	111.00
	Unskilled	21.07	295.00

Linguistic category	Writing proficiency	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Adjective-noun order in noun phrases	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00
Subject-verb order in verb phrases	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00
Dropping the subject in noun phrases	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00
Articles	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00
Prepositions	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00
Plural forms	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00
Punctuation	Skilled	7.50	105.00
	Unskilled	21.50	301.00

According to the Mann-Whitney tests, all these differences between the skilled and unskilled writers were statistically significant (all p-values<.001). These findings are in accordance with the findings derived from previous studies on EFL writers discussed in Section 6.2 above. These studies are those of Al-Sindy (1994), Aljamhoor (1996), Elaswad (2002), Alharthi (2012) and Azzouz (2013). Azzouz (2013), for example, reported a dramatic decrease in the subject-verb agreement errors made by upper-intermediate writers in comparison with the errors made by their pre-intermediate peers.

On the other hand, Abu-Jarad (2008) found that his writers had a low level of command of the use of articles. Although the writers' competency in other aspects of

grammar appeared to improve as they progressed to higher levels, their mastery of articles remained unchanged. Tahaineh (2010) also asserted that the improper use of prepositions among Arab EFL students is apparent even amongst advanced writers.

6.3.2 The linguistic challenges encountered by male vs. female writers

Regarding gender, a series of Mann-Whitney tests was also used to assess the differences in the linguistic errors made by male writers (n=18) and female writers (n=10). Table 6.17 below presents the mean and standard deviation of each error for each group.

Table 6.17

Mean and Standard Deviation of Linguistic Errors Made by Male and Female Writers

Linguistic category	**Gender**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Subject-verb agreement	Male	4.06	3.539
	Female	3.90	3.957
Verb tense	Male	11.89	9.689
	Female	11.30	8.327
Modal verbs	Male	2.50	1.978
	Female	3.00	2.494
Adjective-noun order in noun phrases	Male	3.00	2.351
	Female	2.50	1.841
Subject-verb order in verb phrases	Male	3.50	3.777
	Female	4.00	4.422
Dropping the subject in noun phrases	Male	2.67	2.744
	Female	2.20	2.530
Articles	Male	19.00	16.663
	Female	18.20	16.864
Prepositions	Male	12.22	11.337
	Female	11.20	10.412

Linguistic category	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation
Plural	Male	2.50	2.595
	Female	2.80	3.155
Punctuation	Male	17.06	14.351
	Female	14.40	10.987

These differences are represented in Figure 6.3 below.

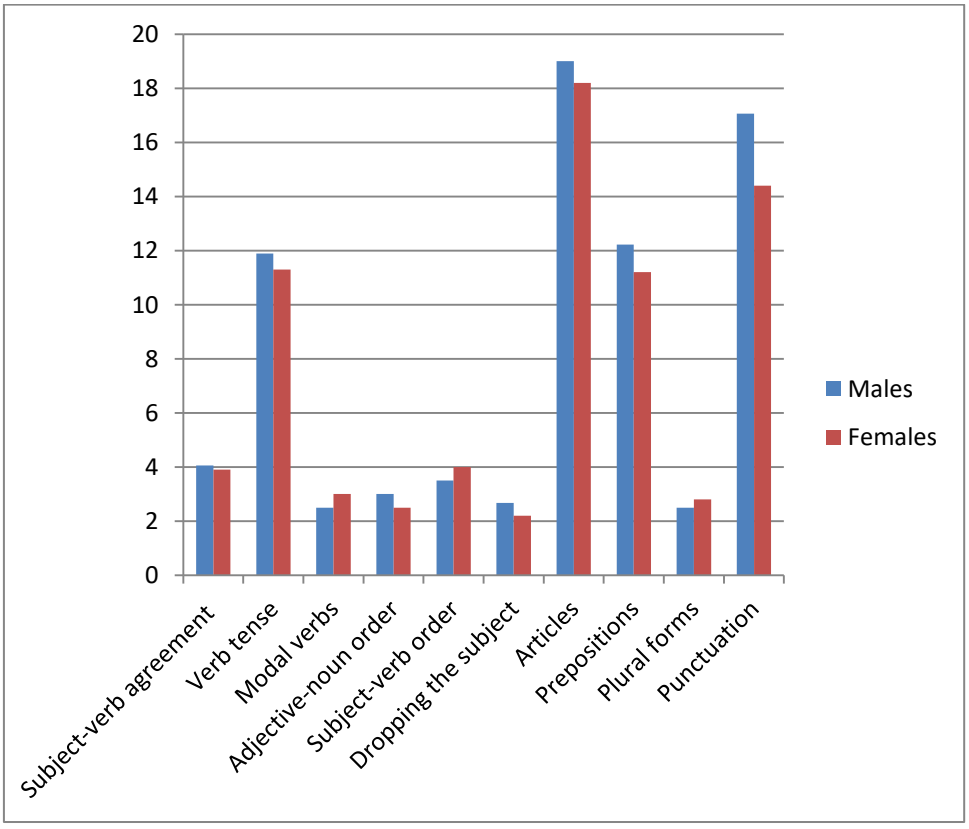

Figure 6.3. Differences in the Linguistic Errors Made by Male and Female Writers.

In order to find out whether these differences were statistically significant, Mann-Whitney tests were employed once again. The results are displayed in Table 6.18 below.

Table 6.18

Mann-Whitney Ranks of Linguistic Errors Made by Male and Female Writers

Linguistic category	**Gender**	**Mean Rank**	**Sum of Ranks**
Subject-verb agreement	Male	14.64	263.50
	Female	14.25	142.50
Verb tense	Male	14.64	263.50
	Female	14.25	142.50
Modal verbs	Male	14.14	254.50
	Female	15.15	151.50
Adjective-noun order in noun phrases	Male	15.00	270.00
	Female	13.60	136.00
Subject-verb order in verb phrases	Male	14.11	254.00
	Female	15.20	152.00
Dropping the subject in noun phrases	Male	15.11	272.00
	Female	13.40	134.00
Articles	Male	15.19	273.50
	Female	13.25	132.50
Prepositions	Male	15.00	270.00
	Female	13.60	136.00
Plural forms	Male	14.39	259.00
	Female	14.70	147.00
Punctuation	Male	14.89	268.00
	Female	13.80	138.00

Interestingly, data analysis showed no significant differences between males and females in any type of error. To the best of my knowledge, no research has been undertaken to examine the extent to which gender may influence the learners' use or misuse of certain linguistic categories when writing in L2. Previous research in the field has either studied only one gender or treated the two genders as one group. For example, Elaswad (2002) did not

differentiate between the performance of the male and female writers in his study. While Alharthi (2012) only examined the errors made by male Saudi writers, Alhaysony (2012) investigated only those made by female Saudi writers.

6.4 A closer look at the linguistic challenges encountered by four writers in this research

In the following sections, I examine the performance of four writers from each of the four groups studied in this research: skilled vs unskilled and male vs female writers. It was found that the majority of the errors that the writers made also occurred in the TAP and the written product of the TAP. Some of these errors could possibly have been caused by interference from the writers' L1 (Arabic). It is also likely that such errors could possibly have resulted from insufficient knowledge of the unique features of the English language or from not paying enough attention when using them.

The remaining errors that the writers made were found only in the written product. There are two possible explanations for those errors. They could have been caused by negligence and/or haste; and indeed by not revising the written text thoroughly enough to spot those errors. They could have also resulted from misspelling those words.

In the following sections, I will attempt to explore the reasons for the errors made by each of the four writers and attempt to identify those that could possibly have been caused by interference from the writers' L1.

6.4.1 Participant SM1 (a skilled male writer)

The total number of errors that Participant SM1 made was 15. The majority of these errors (80%) co-occurred in the TAP and the written product of the TAP. The remaining errors (20%) were found only in the written product. The following table provides an overview of all the errors made by Participant SM1 and when they occurred.

Table 6.19

Errors Made by Participant SM1

No.	**Error**	**Number**	**Occurred in speaking and writing**	**Occurred in writing only**
1	Subject-verb agreement	0	---	---
2	Verb tenses	4	3	1
3	Modal verbs	2	2	0
4	Adjective-noun order	0	---	---
5	Subject-verb order in verb phrases	0	---	---
6	Dropping the subject in noun phrases	0	---	---
7	Articles	3	3	0
8	Prepositions	2	2	1
9	Plural	0	---	---
10	Punctuation	4	2	2
Total		15	12	3

The following chart shows the percentage of each of these errors in Participant SM1's essay:

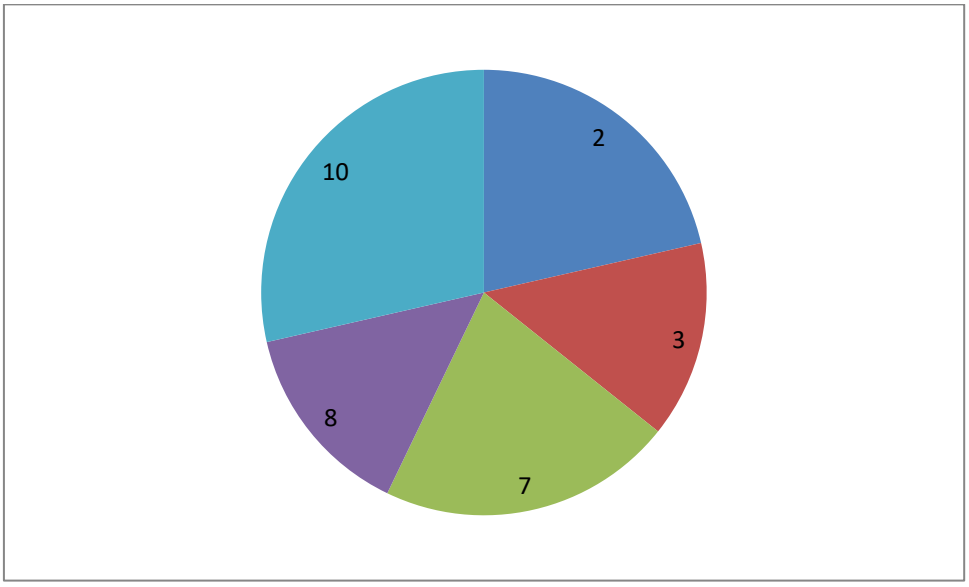

Figure 6.4 The percentage of errors in Participant SM1's essay

As depicted in the Pie-Chart marked as Figure 6.4, most of the errors that Participant SM1 made fell in the two categories of verb tenses and punctuation. These were followed by errors in the use of articles. Finally, the same percentage of errors was identified in the two categories of modal verbs and prepositions. No errors were made in any of the four remaining categories investigated in the present research; therefore, those categories were not included in the figure. The percentages were also removed from figure 6.4 as they relate to very few errors and therefore can distort the picture (e.g. 13% of the total = 2 errors).

The reader's attention is drawn to the proposition that three of the 15 errors that were identified in Participant SM1's text could possibly be attributed to the negative transfer of some of the Arabic linguistic features. These are presented in Table 6.20 below.

Table 6.20

Errors in Participant SM1's TAP Caused by Interference of L1

Category of the error	**Error**	**Correct form**	**Possible explanation for the error**
Verb tense	By the time I went there, they moved out.	By the time I went there, they had moved out.	In Arabic, the past perfect form does not exist. The simple past tense is used instead.
Article	I liked to play game called...	I liked to play a game called...	Indefinite articles such as (a) does not exist in Arabic.
Preposition	He liked to sit on his computer a lot.	He liked to sit at his computer a lot.	in Arabic, the preposition used after the verb 'sit' is 'on'

6.4.2 Participant SF1 (a skilled female writer)

The total number of errors that Participant SF1 made was 17. As with Participant SM1, The majority of these errors (64.7%) co-occurred in the TAP and the written product of the

TAP. The remaining errors (35.3%) were found only in the written product. The following table provides an overview of all the errors made by Participant SF1 and when these errors occurred.

Table 6.21

Errors Made by Participant SF1

No.	**Error**	**Number**	**Occurred in speaking and writing**	**Occurred in writing only**
1	Subject-verb agreement	0	---	---
2	Verb tenses	3	2	1
3	Modal verbs	0	---	---
4	Adjective-noun order	2	2	---
5	Subject-verb order in verb phrases	0	---	---
6	Dropping the subject in noun phrases	0	---	---
7	Articles	4	3	1
8	Prepositions	3	3	0
9	Plural	0	---	---
10	Punctuation	5	1	4
Total		17	11	6

The following chart shows the percentage of each of these errors in Participant SF1's essay:

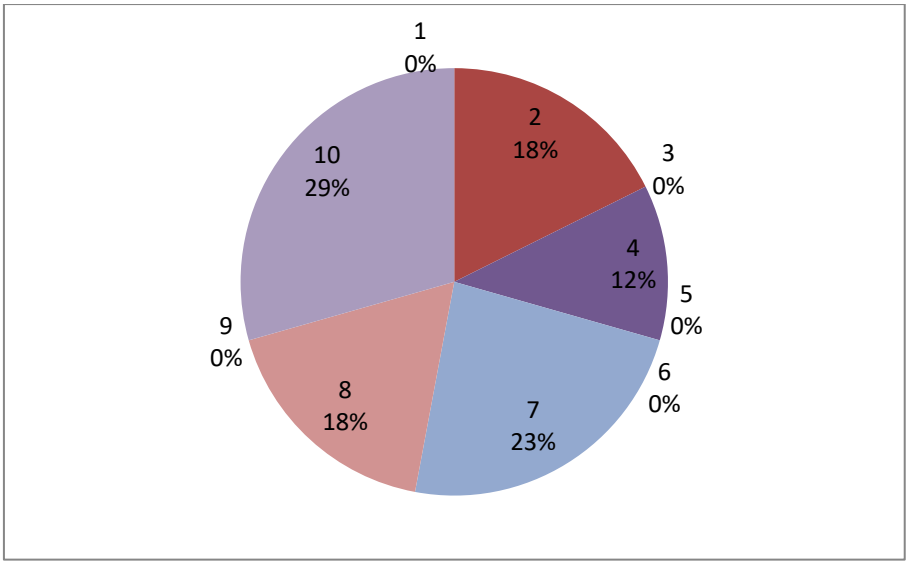

Figure 6.5 The percentage of errors in Participant SF1's essay

The above Pie-Chart shows that most of the errors that Participant SF1 made fell in the category of punctuation, followed by errors in the use of articles. The same percentage of errors was identified for both categories of verb tense and prepositions. The smallest number of errors was found in the category of Adjective-noun order. No errors were made in any of the five remaining categories investigated in the present research.

As with Participant SM1, three of the errors that were found in Participant SF1's text could be attributed to the negative interference of L1. These are shown in Table 6.22 below.

Table 6.22

Errors in Participant SF1's TAP Caused by Interference of L1

Category of the error	**Error**	**Correct form**	**Possible explanation for the error**
Adjective-noun order	It was book interesting.	It was an interesting book.	Nouns precede adjectives in noun phrases in Arabic.
Articles	It was book interesting.	It was an interesting book.	Indefinite articles such as 'an' does not exist in Arabic.

Category of the error	Error	Correct form	Possible explanation for the error
Prepositions	English is difficult learn.	English is difficult to learn.	In Arabic, no preposition is used after the adjective 'difficult'.

6.4.3 Participant UM1 (an unskilled male writer)

The total number of errors that Participant UM1 made was 148. Not surprisingly, the majority of these errors (68.9%) also occurred in the TAP and the written product of the TAP. The remaining errors (31.1%) were found only in the written product. The following table provides an overview of all the errors made by Participant UM1 and when these errors took place.

Table 6.23

Errors Made by Participant UM1

No.	Error	Number	Occurred in speaking and writing	Occurred in writing only
1	Subject-verb agreement	4	3	1
2	Verb tenses	25	21	4
3	Modal verbs	5	5	0
4	Adjective-noun order	6	6	0
5	Subject-verb order in verb phrases	6	5	1
6	Dropping the subject in noun phrases	3	3	0
7	Articles	32	28	4
8	Prepositions	27	25	2
9	Plural	6	3	3
10	Punctuation	34	3	31
Total		148	102	46

The following chart shows the percentage of each of these errors in Participant UM1's essay:

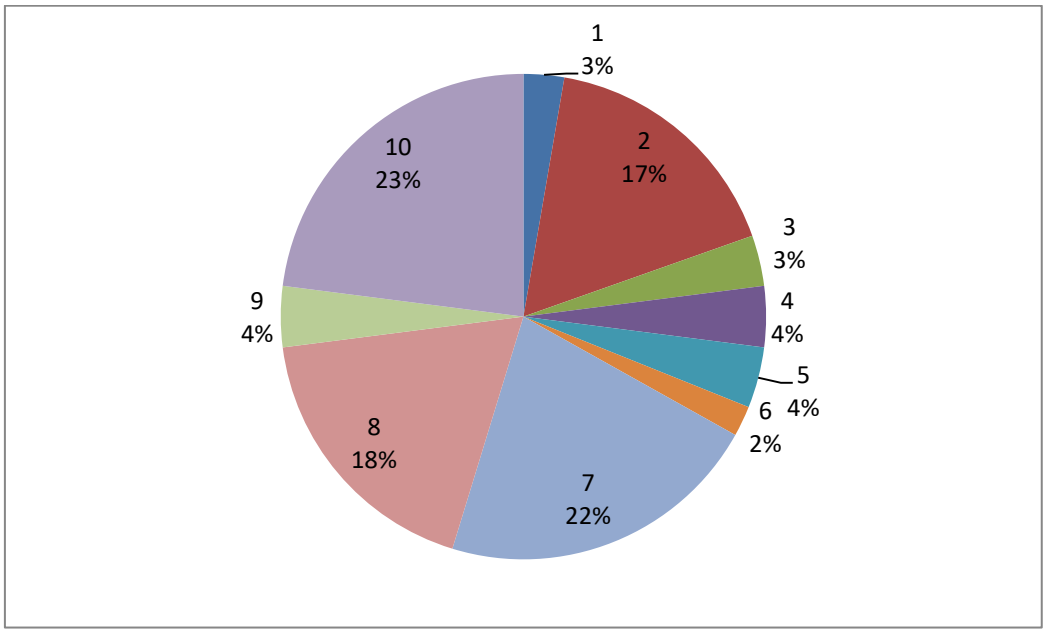

Figure 6.6 The percentage of errors in Participant UM1's essay

Most of the errors that Participant UM1 made fell in the categories of punctuation, articles, prepositions and verb tense respectively. The same percentage of errors was identified in the three categories of adjective-noun order, subject-verb order in verb phrases and prepositions. These were followed by errors in subject-verb agreement and modal verbs. Finally, the smallest number of errors was found in the category of dropping the subject in noun phrases.

It should be noted that at least seven of the errors that were identified in Participant UM1's text could possibly be attributed to the negative transfer of some of the Arabic linguistic features. An example of each category of error is presented in Table 6.24 below.

Table 6.24

Errors in Participant UM1's TAP Caused by Interference of L1

Category of the error	**Error**	**Correct form**	**Possible explanation for the error**
Subject-verb agreement	He <u>like</u> to go there .... They <u>likes</u> the place too.	He <u>likes</u> to go there .... They <u>like</u> the place too.	In Arabic, a suffix is added to the verb in the present simple tense when the subject is plural such as 'they'. No suffix is added to this verb when the subject is singular such as 'he'.
Verb tense	I travelled to Makkah .... My father <u>travel</u> there last year.	I travelled to Makkah .... My father <u>travelled</u> there last year.	The verb 'travelled' in the first sentence is inflected for tense (just like in Arabic), and it was written correctly. However, in the second sentence the same verb was not inflected for tense. A possible explanation could be that no past tense marker is added to the verb in Arabic when the subject is singular and masculine like 'father'
Adjective-noun order	We had <u>garden beautiful</u>.	We had <u>beautiful garden</u>.	Nouns precede adjectives in noun phrases in Arabic.
Subject-verb order in verb phrases	<u>Wrote my friend</u> book.	<u>My friend wrote</u> ...	Verbs precede subjects in verb phrases in Arabic.
Dropping the subject in noun phrases	<u>Went</u> to public school.	<u>I went</u> to ...	Arabic is a pro-drop language, in which the subject of a clause can be suppressed.

Category of the error	Error	Correct form	Possible explanation for the error
Articles	I had dog.	I had a dog.	Indefinite articles such as 'a' does not exist in Arabic.
Prepositions	We wanted play all the time.	We wanted to play all the time.	In Arabic, no preposition is used after the verb 'want'.

6.4.4 Participant UF1 (an unskilled female writer)

The total number of errors that Participant UF1 made was 138. As with the other writers in the present study, the majority of these errors (69.6%) also occurred in the TAP and the written product of the TAP. The remaining errors (30.4%) were found only in the written product. The following table provides an overview of all the errors made by Participant UF1 and when these errors occurred.

Table 6.25

Errors Made by Participant UF1

No.	Error	Number	Occurred in speaking and writing	Occurred in writing only
1	Subject-verb agreement	4	2	2
2	Verb tenses	21	15	6
3	Modal verbs	5	5	0
4	Adjective-noun order	4	4	0
5	Subject-verb order in verb phrases	9	9	0
6	Dropping the subject in noun phrases	4	3	1
7	Articles	36	32	4
8	Prepositions	19	19	0

No.	Error	Number	Occurred in speaking and writing	Occurred in writing only
9	Plural	7	5	2
10	Punctuation	29	2	27
total		138	96	42

The following chart shows the percentage of each of these errors in Participant UF1's essay:

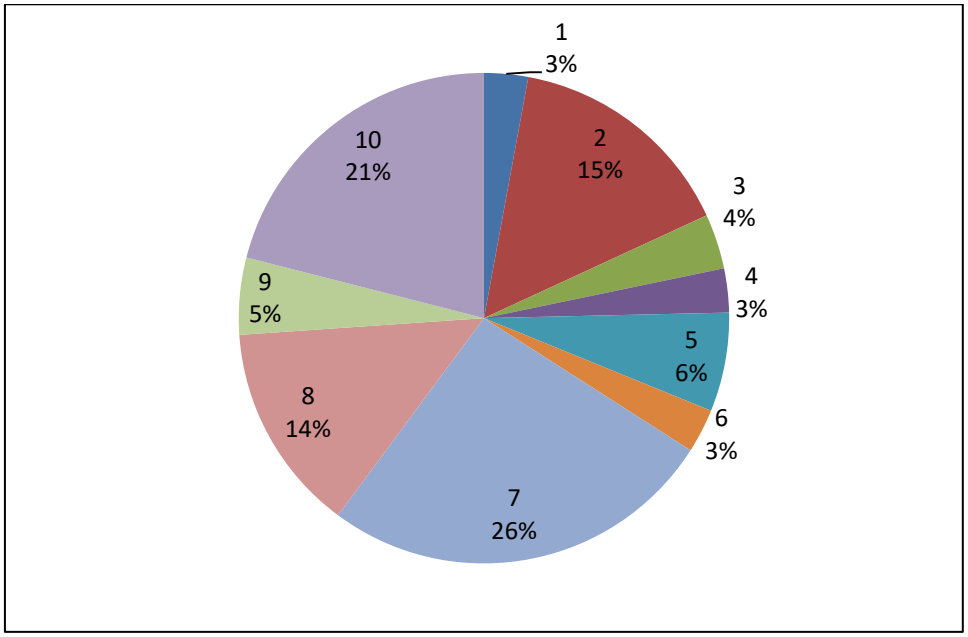

Figure 6.7 The percentage of errors in Participant UF1's essay

The above Pie-Chart shows that most of the errors that Participant UF1 made fell in the categories of articles, punctuation, verb tense and prepositions respectively. These were followed by errors in Subject-verb order, in verb phrases and in plural forms. Next, there were errors in the use of modal verbs. Finally, the same percentage of errors was identified in the three categories of subject-verb agreement, adjective-noun order and dropping the subject in noun phrases.

As with the other writers, a few of the errors (at least six) that were found in Participant UF1's text could be attributed to the negative interference of L1. These are shown in Table 6.26 below.

Table 6.26

Errors in Participant UF1's TAP Caused by Interference of L1

Category of the error	**Error**	**Correct form**	**Possible explanation for the error**
Subject-verb agreement	She say she is like me .... They says to me I need to study.	She says she is like me .... They say to me I need to study.	In Arabic, a suffix is added to the verb in the present simple tense when the subject is plural such as 'they'. No suffix is added to this verb when the subject is singular such as 'he'.
Adjective-noun order	We played games interesting.	We played interesting games.	Nouns precede adjectives in noun phrases in Arabic.
Subject-verb order in verb phrases	Went my family to beach.	My family went to beach.	Verbs precede subjects in verb phrases in Arabic.
Dropping the subject in noun phrases	Liked computer games.	We liked computer games.	Arabic is a pro-drop language, in which the subject of a clause can be suppressed.
Articles	It was good school.	It was a good school.	Indefinite articles such as 'a' does not exist in Arabic.
Prepositions	We need to travel on plane.	We need to travel by plane.	in Arabic, the preposition used after the verb 'travel' is 'on' not 'by'.

To sum up, interference of the linguistic features of the participants' L1 could be considered a cause or contributory factor in at least seven types of errors found in their written texts. These include: subject-verb agreement, adjective, adjective-noun order, subject-verb order in verb phrases, dropping the subject in noun phrases, articles and prepositions. It is also interesting to point out that there was some consistency between the repetition of errors in the TAP and its written product and the occurrence of similar errors in the written product only. It was found that 69.50 percent of the errors were verbalised before they were produced, while 30.5 percent of the errors were produced only in writing. This could probably mean that the majority of the errors made by the writers were caused by insufficient knowledge of the unique features of the English language or by not paying enough attention when using them.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the discussion focused primarily on what the participants of this study found as the most challenging linguistic features when writing in English. They were categorised as errors in subject-verb agreement, verb tense, modal verbs, word order, dropping subjects, plural forms, articles, prepositions and punctuation. These errors were found to be more frequent among the unskilled writers than the skilled ones. In addition, it was found that the average number of errors committed by female writers was fewer than that of the male writers. Nonetheless, the difference between these two groups was only marginal as evidenced by the tables in this chapter.

Chapter 7: Results and discussion of the relationships between the writing strategies that Saudi learners use when composing in English and the linguistic challenges they encounter

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis that was carried out to answer the third research question in the present study. Interesting findings were obtained regarding the relationships between the main strategies used by the writers and the major linguistic challenges they faced when writing in English. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study to correlate these two variables. Therefore, in the majority of the sections discussed below, no comparable research could be found in order to compare its findings with the results of the current research.

7.2 The relationships between the ten writing strategies and ten linguistic challenges investigated in this research

To address the third research question in this study, Spearman's rank correlations were computed between the ten writing strategies used by the participants and each of the ten types of error they were found to make. The Spearman's rho is used when the data is not normally distributed as it is more resilient to deviations from the normality assumption than the Pearson's correlation coefficient. The correlations that were found to be statistically significant are discussed in the following sections.

7.2.1 The relationships between the writing strategies and subject-verb agreement errors

Interestingly, strong positive correlations were found between all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts) and errors in subject-verb agreement, with Spearman's correlations ranging from .673 to .769. This finding provides further evidence for the result discussed in Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.1 in the previous two chapters. It was found that unskilled students used their L1 to a much greater extent than their skilled peers. Consistently, the former group was also found to make subject-verb agreement errors more frequently than the latter group. This could possibly mean that the unskilled students thought in their L1 and used its grammatical features when writing in L2, and thus made a large number of subject-verb agreement errors. As Aljamhoor (1996) explained, such writers "were attempting to adopt many linguistic rules from Arabic grammar and to match them with English." Subsequently, this grammatical feature was challenging to those students since the two languages have completely different subject-verb agreement systems, as discussed in Chapter 3. This finding is also in accordance with that of Azzouz's (2013) research, which showed a dramatic decrease of the errors upper intermediate students made in comparison with the errors made by pre intermediate peers.

On the other hand, moderate to strong negative correlations were found between subject-verb agreement errors and four writing strategies: The use of global planning, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising, with correlation coefficients ranging from -.662 to -.417. This result is significant and confirms the findings reported in Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.5, 5.2.6 and 5.2.8.1 in Chapter 5, in which skilled students were found to use these four strategies more frequently than their unskilled peers. The skilled students were careful when constructing their English texts as they planned it globally, were considerate of their potential

readers and frequently evaluated and edited what they had written. In the same vein, these writers also made significantly fewer subject-verb agreement errors than their unskilled counterparts. Since the relationship between these variables was found to be significant when calculated statistically, it appears that raising the unskilled students' awareness about the importance of using the above mentioned writing strategies could possibly help reduce the number of subject-verb agreement errors they make when writing in English. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and subject-verb agreement errors are presented in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1

Spearman's Rho Correlations between Writing Strategies and Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

Writing Strategies	**Subject-Verb Agreement Errors**
Global planning	-.417*
Local planning	.238
Rehearsing	-.330
Reading the topic	-.149
Reading what was written	-.040
Using L1 for generating ideas	.769**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.673**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.756**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.684**
Awareness of the audience	-.662**
Evaluation	-.591**
Using time monitoring expressions	.275
Revising	-.485**
Editing	.180

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.2.2 The relationships between the writing strategies and verb tense errors

Similar to subject-verb agreement errors discussed above, all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts) were found to be strongly and positively correlated with verb tense errors, with correlation coefficients ranging from .681 to .748. This result supports the findings presented in the previous two chapters (Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.2). Unskilled writers were found to use their L1 considerably more than their skilled counterparts. Likewise, the unskilled group also made more verb tense errors than the skilled group. This might indicate that the use of L1 for generating ideas and translating L2 texts by the unskilled students while composing in L2 could possibly have led to errors in the use of verb tense. As UM3 explained in the stimulated recalls, "I find some tenses in English confusing as they do not have equivalents in Arabic. In English, we study the past simple and the past perfect. I really cannot choose between them when writing in English. So, I say the sentence to myself in Arabic and then I just translate it into English and write it down." As the two languages have completely different verb tense systems, this grammatical feature was problematic to the unskilled students. This finding also supports those of Al-Hazaymeh's (1994) and Al-Sindy's (1994) studies, which reported than unskilled writers, made a large number of verb tense errors, as discussed in the previous chapter.

In contrast, verb tense errors were found to be negatively correlated with four writing strategies: The use of global planning, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising, with correlations coefficients ranging from -.645 to -.422. These findings are in accordance with those discussed in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.5, 5.2.6 and 5.2.8.1), where all these strategies were utilised more by the skilled writers than by the unskilled writers. As a result, verb tense errors were found to be less common among this group of writers. Thus, it seems that encouraging unskilled writers to use these strategies when writing in English may play a

role in facilitating the challenges they face with verb tense choice when writing in English. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and tense errors are shown in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and Tense Errors

Writing Strategies	**Tense Errors**
Global planning	-.497**
Local planning	.147
Rehearsing	-.277
Reading the topic	-.100
Reading what was written	-.025
Using L1 for generating ideas	.734**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.748**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.696**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.681**
Awareness of the audience	-.645**
Evaluation	-.555**
Using time monitoring expressions	.028
Revising	-.422*
Editing	.300

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.2.3 The relationships between the writing strategies and modal verb errors

In line with errors in subject-verb agreement and verb tense discussed above, strong positive correlations were found between all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts) and errors in

the use of modal verbs, with Spearman's correlation coefficients ranging from .712 to .778. This finding provides further evidence for the result discussed in Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.3 in the previous two chapters. It was found that unskilled students used their L1 more significantly than their skilled peers. Consistently, the former group was also found to make modal verb errors more frequently than the latter group. This could probably mean that since the unskilled students thought in their L1 and used its grammatical features when writing in L2, they made a large number of modal verb errors. Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) pointed out that each model verb has more than one meaning; hence, they classified them according to the meaning they carried. They regarded this feature as a significant challenging factor to master modal verbs usage in English. This finding is similar to that of El-Aswad's (2002) study, which found that weaker students encountered difficulties with modal verbs, as discussed in the previous chapter.

On the other hand, weak to moderate negative correlations were found between errors in the use of modal verbs and three writing strategies: global planning, awareness of the audience and evaluation, with correlations coefficients ranging from -.497 to -.377. This result is significant and confirms the findings reported in Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.5 and 5.2.6 in Chapter 5, in which skilled students were found to use these three strategies more frequently than their unskilled peers. The skilled students were careful when constructing their English texts as they planned it globally, were considerate of their potential readers and frequently evaluated what they had written. These writers also made considerably less modal verb errors than their unskilled counterparts. Since the relationship between these variables was found to be significant when calculated statistically, it appears that raising unskilled students' awareness about the importance of using the above mentioned writing strategies could possibly help reduce the number of modal verb errors they make when writing in English.

The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and modal verb errors are presented in Table 7.3 below.

Table 7.3

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and Modal Verb Errors

Writing Strategies	**Modal Verb Errors**
Global planning	-.393*
Local planning	.180
Rehearsing	-.262
Reading the topic	-.075
Reading what was written	.130
Using L1 for generating ideas	.744**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.755**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.778**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.712**
Awareness of the audience	-.497**
Evaluation	-.377*
Using time monitoring expressions	.284
Revising	-.331
Editing	.388

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.2.4 The relationships between the writing strategies and subject-verb order in verb phrases errors

in line with the linguistic errors discussed above, strong to very strong positive correlations were found between all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of

retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts) and errors in the subject-verb order in verb phrases, with Spearman's correlation coefficients ranging from .667 to .846. Additionally, a weak positive correlation was found between this linguistic error and editing (r = .387). This finding provides further evidence for the result discussed in Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.4.1 in the previous two chapters. It was found that unskilled students used their L1 more significantly than their skilled peers. Consistently, the former group was also found to make subject-verb order errors more frequently than the latter group. This could possibly mean that as the unskilled students thought in their L1 and used its grammatical features when writing in L2, they made a large number of subject-verb order errors. To the best of my knowledge, this type of error was not reported by previous studies on Arab learners of EFL. When asked about it in the stimulated recalls UM5 explained that "I really cannot get it. The verb-subject order looks absolutely correct to me, but they say no. It is the opposite in English! They want to me to start the sentence with the subject, which sounds funny to me."

On the other hand, weak to moderate negative correlations were found between errors in the subject-verb order in verb phrases and four writing strategies: global planning, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising, with correlation coefficients ranging from -.634 to -.473. This result is significant and confirms the findings reported in Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.5, 5.2.6 and 5.2.8.1 in Chapter 5, where skilled students were found to use these four strategies more frequently than their unskilled peers. The skilled students were careful when constructing their English texts as they planned it globally, were considerate of their potential readers and frequently evaluated and edited what they had written. These writers also made fewer subject-verb order errors than their unskilled counterparts. Since the relationship between these variables was found to be significant when calculated statistically, it appears that raising the awareness amongst unskilled students about the importance of using the above mentioned writing strategies could possibly help reduce the number of subject-verb

order errors they make when writing in English. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and subject-verb order errors are presented in Table 7.4 below.

Table 7.4

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and subject-verb order errors

Writing Strategies	**Subject-Verb Order Errors**
Global planning	-.479**
Local planning	.118
Rehearsing	-.281
Reading the topic	-.069
Reading what was written	.159
Using L1 for generating ideas	.846**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.775**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.829**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.667**
Awareness of the audience	-.634**
Evaluation	-.579**
Using time monitoring expressions	.135
Revising	-.473*
Editing	.387*

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.2.5 The relationships between the writing strategies and adjective-noun order in noun phrases errors

Similar to the linguistic errors discussed above, moderate to very strong positive correlations were found between errors in the adjective-noun order in noun phases and all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving

vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts), with Spearman's correlation coefficients ranging from .595 to .812. This result supports the findings presented in the previous two chapters (Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.4.2). Unskilled writers were found to use their L1 more considerably than their skilled counterparts. The unskilled group also made more adjective-noun order errors than the skilled group. This may indicate that the use of L1 for generating ideas and translating L2 texts by the unskilled students while composing in L2 could possibly have led to errors in the use of adjective-noun order. This finding supports that of Al-Sindy (1994), who reported that weak students made errors in the adjective-noun order. He argued that these errors could be attributed to the grammatical differences between English and Arabic. Azzouz (2013) also found that unskilled students made some errors in adjective-noun order when writing in English. He suggested that these errors could be attributed to either the interference of L1 (Arabic) structure or lack of knowledge of the grammatical system of L2 (English).

Conversely, moderate negative correlations were found between errors in the adjective-noun order in noun phases and four writing strategies: global planning, rehearsing, awareness of the audience and evaluation, with correlation coefficients ranging from -.583 to -.399. These findings are in accordance with those discussed in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.5 and 5.2.6), where all these strategies were utilised more by the skilled writers than by the unskilled ones. Consequently, adjective-noun order errors were found to be less common among this group of writers. Thus, it appears that encouraging unskilled writers to use these strategies when writing in English might play a role in facilitating them to mitigate the challenges they face with the use of adjective-noun order in English noun phrases. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and adjective-noun order errors are shown in Table 7.5 below.

Table 7.5

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and Adjective-Noun Order Errors

Writing Strategies	**Adjective-Noun Order Errors**
Global planning	-.564**
Local planning	.215
Rehearsing	-.399*
Reading the topic	-.084
Reading what was written	.041
Using L1 for generating ideas	.812**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.683**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.682**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.595**
Awareness of the audience	-.500**
Evaluation	-.583**
Using time monitoring expressions	.233
Revising	-.334
Editing	.272

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.2.6 The relationships between the writing strategies and dropping the subject

Following in line with the linguistic errors discussed above, strong to very strong positive correlations were found between errors in dropping the subject in noun phrases and all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts), with Spearman's correlation coefficient ranging from .612 to .836. This result supports the findings presented in the previous two chapters (Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.5). Unskilled writers were found to use their L1 more than their skilled counterparts.

The unskilled group also made a larger number of dropping the subject errors than the skilled group. This may indicate that the use of L1 for generating ideas and translating L2 texts by the unskilled students while composing in L2 could possibly have led to errors related to the dropping of the subject in noun phrases. Al-Sindy (1994) also reported that his unskilled Saudi participants sometimes omitted the subject pronouns when writing in English. Al-Sindy explained that "it is because they are implied in verbs, as explained above. It would be redundant to use them according to Arabic. Certainly, these errors are due to mother-tongue interference" (p. 82).

In contrast, moderate negative correlations were found between this linguistic error and five writing strategies: global planning, rehearsing, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising, with correlation coefficients ranging from -.603 to -.462. These findings are in accordance with those discussed in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.5, 5.2.6 and 5.2.8.1), where all these strategies were utilised more by the skilled writers than by the unskilled writers. Accordingly, the dropping of the subject errors were found to be less common among this group of writers. Therefore there is immense value in encouraging unskilled writers to use these strategies when writing in English so that it may help them overcome the challenges they face in this particular linguistic category. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and dropping of the subject errors are shown in Table 7.6 below.

Table 7.6

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and dropping the subject

Writing Strategies	**Dropping the Subject**
Global planning	-.553**
Local planning	.275
Rehearsing	-.462*
Reading the topic	-.291
Reading what was written	.052
Using L1 for generating ideas	.836**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.669**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.799**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.612**
Awareness of the audience	-.555**
Evaluation	-.603**
Using time monitoring expressions	.190
Revising	-.463*
Editing	.205

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.2.7 The relationships between the writing strategies and article errors

in line with the linguistic errors discussed above, moderate to strong positive correlations were found between all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts) and errors in the use of articles, with Spearman's correlation coefficient ranging from .562 to .745. This finding provides further evidence for the results discussed in Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.6 in the previous two chapters. It was found that unskilled students used their L1 to a greater extent than their skilled peers. Consistently, the former group was also found to make article errors more

frequently than the latter group. This could possibly suggest that the unskilled students thought in their L1 and used its grammatical features when writing in L2, and consequently made a larger number of article errors. Agnihotri, Khanna and Mukherjee (1984) explain that the English article system puzzles Arab learners, especially those who tend to think in Arabic when writing in English or those whose tendency is to translate directly from Arabic to English. Even if a learner has been in contact with the language for a long period of time, he/she occasionally struggles with the English article system. Zaghoul's (2002) study also showed that errors in the use of articles were one of the most recurring errors among weaker EFL writers. Similarly, Azzouz (2013) found that the correct use of articles represents a major challenge to Arab students hoping to master EFL writing.

Moderate negative correlations were found between this linguistic error and four writing strategies: global planning, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising, with correlation coefficients ranging from -.578 to -.495. This result is significant and confirms the findings reported in Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.5, 5.2.6 and 5.2.8.1 in Chapter 5, in which skilled students were found to use these four strategies more frequently than their unskilled peers. The skilled students were careful when constructing their English texts as they planned it globally, were considerate of their potential readers and frequently evaluated and edited what they had written. In the same vein, these writers also made fewer article errors than their unskilled counterparts. Since the relationship between these variables was found to be significant when calculated statistically, there is a strong suggestion that raising awareness about the importance of using the above mentioned writing strategies could possibly help reduce the number of article errors unskilled students make when writing in English. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and article errors are presented in Table 7.7 below.

Table 7.7

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and Article Errors

Writing Strategies	**Article Errors**
Global planning	-.495**
Local planning	.227
Rehearsing	-.354
Reading the topic	-.212
Reading what was written	-.033
Using L1 for generating ideas	.745**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.599**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.729**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.562**
Awareness of the audience	-.578**
Evaluation	-.563**
Using time monitoring expressions	.169
Revising	-.504**
Editing	.164

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

7.2.8 The relationships between the writing strategies and proposition errors

In keeping with the nature of the linguistic errors discussed above, strong positive correlations were found between errors in the use of propositions and all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts), with Spearman's correlation coefficient ranging from .601 to .671. This result supports the findings presented in the previous two chapters (Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.7). Unskilled writers were found to use their L1 more than their skilled counterparts. In the same vein, the unskilled group also made more proposition errors than the skilled group. This could possibly

lead to suggestions that the use of L1 for generating ideas and translating L2 texts by the unskilled students while composing in L2 could have possibly led to errors in the use of propositions. As Al-Sindy (1994) explained, the majority of these errors could be attributed to the influence of L1 into L2 writing. Mehdi (1981) also pointed out that when writing in English, Arab learners tend to make improper use of prepositions when there is no equivalent in Arabic. He attributed this issue to the literal translation of prepositions from Arabic into English. Although Arabic has a large number of prepositions, the fact that they do not necessarily correspond to their counterparts in English makes it harder to use the right form of prepositions when speaking or writing in English (El-Aswad, 2002).

In contrast, weak to moderate negative correlations were found between this linguistic error and four writing strategies: global planning, rehearsing, awareness of the audience and evaluation, with Spearman's correlation coefficients ranging from -.561 to -.375. These findings are in accordance with those discussed in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.5 and 5.2.6), where all these strategies were used more often by the skilled writers than by the unskilled ones. In line with this, errors in prepositions were found to be less common among this group of writers. Thus, encouraging unskilled writers to use these strategies when writing in English may help them overcome the challenges they face with propositions. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and proposition errors are shown in Table 7.8 below.

Table 7.8

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and Proposition Errors

Writing Strategies	**Proposition Errors**
Global planning	-.557**
Local planning	.168
Rehearsing	-.375*
Reading the topic	-.184
Reading what was written	.023
Using L1 for generating ideas	.671**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.601**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.633**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.649**
Awareness of the audience	-.457*
Evaluation	-.561**
Using time monitoring expressions	.033
Revising	-.365
Editing	.361

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.2.9 The relationships between the writing strategies and plural form errors

Similar to the linguistic errors discussed above, moderate to very strong positive correlations were found between errors in the use of plural forms and all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts), with Spearman's correlation coefficients ranging from .448 to .817. This finding provides further evidence for the result discussed in Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.8 in the previous two chapters. It was found that unskilled students use their L1 more than their skilled peers when writing in L2. Consistently, the former group was also found to make plural form errors more

frequently than the latter group. This could indicate that since the unskilled students thought in their L1 and used its grammatical features when writing in L2, which lead to a larger number of plural form errors. According to El-Aswad's (2002) study, unskilled Arab writers experienced challenges in the use of the plural form in English writing. This difficulty stemmed from the fact that it is not easy to determine whether irregular words in English are singular or plural. Azzouz's (2013) study attributed some of the errors that the students made in the use of the plural form to the negative interference of L1.

Moderate negative correlations were found between this linguistic error and four writing strategies: global planning, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising, with correlations coefficients ranging from -.682 to -.451. This result is significant and confirms the findings reported in Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.5, 5.2.6 and 5.2.8.1 in Chapter 5, where skilled students were found to use these four strategies more frequently and more effectively than their unskilled peers. The skilled students were careful when constructing their English texts as they planned it globally, were considerate of their potential readers and frequently evaluated and edited what they had written. These writers also made fewer plural form errors than their unskilled counterparts. Since the relationship between these variables was found to be significant when calculated statistically, it appears that raising the awareness about the importance of using the above mentioned writing strategies could possibly help reduce the number of plural form errors unskilled students make when writing in English. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and plural form errors are presented in Table 7.9 below.

Table 7.9

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and Plural Form Errors

Writing Strategies	**Plural Form Errors**
Global planning	-.451*
Local planning	.113
Rehearsing	-.231
Reading the topic	-.031
Reading what was written	.118
Using L1 for generating ideas	.817**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.740**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.768**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.448*
Awareness of the audience	-.682**
Evaluation	-.573**
Using time monitoring expressions	.104
Revising	-.521**
Editing	.187

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.2.10 The relationships between the writing strategies and punctuation errors

Keeping in line with the linguistic errors discussed above, there was evidence of strong positive correlations between all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts) and errors in the use of punctuation marks, with Spearman's correlation coefficient ranging from .618 to .725. This result supports the findings presented in the previous two chapters (Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.9). Unskilled writers were found to use their L1 more than their skilled counterparts. Keeping with this trend, the unskilled group also made more punctuation errors than the skilled group.

This may possibly indicate that the use of L1 for generating ideas and translating L2 texts while composing in L2 could possibly have led to errors being committed by the unskilled students with regard to the usage of the correct punctuation. This is in accordance with Fageeh's (2003) study, which also found that Saudi students seemed to be unaware of the punctuation rules of the English language. According to Labidi's (1992) study, Arab students seemed to omit capitalisations when writing in English. He argues that the poor mastery of punctuation in English could be attributed to interference of L1 (Arabic) since it is neither widely used nor adequately taught, which consequently resulted in the omission of punctuation in English. Furthermore, Labidi points out that the absence of punctuation in Arabic writing in first place could also be responsible for the tendency of writing longer sentences by Arab EFL writers.

Moderate negative correlations were found between this linguistic error and five writing strategies: global planning, rehearsing, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising, with Spearman's correlation coefficients ranging from -.550 to -.389. These findings are largely in line with the findings discussed in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.5, 5.2.6 and 5.2.8.1), where all these strategies were used more frequently by the skilled writers than by the unskilled ones. In line with this finding, punctuation errors were found to be less common among this group of skilled writers. Therefore, encouraging unskilled writers to use these strategies when writing in English may play a role in enabling them to meet the challenges they face when having to choose the correct punctuation. The correlation coefficients between all the writing strategies and punctuation errors are shown in Table 7.10 below.

Table 7.10

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Writing Strategies and Punctuation Errors

Writing Strategies	**Punctuation Errors**
Global planning	-.533**
Local planning	.230
Rehearsing	-.389*
Reading the topic	-.092
Reading what was written	-.037
Using L1 for generating ideas	.725**
Using L1 for retrieving vocabulary	.639**
Using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary	.628**
Direct translation of Arabic texts	.618**
Awareness of the audience	-.550**
Evaluation	-.548**
Using time monitoring expressions	.194
Revising	-.425*
Editing	.290

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the relationships between the main writing strategies used by the participants in this research and the major linguistic challenges they faced when writing in English. Interestingly, all four categories of using L1 (using L1 for generating ideas, using L1 for retrieving vocabulary, using L1 for checking the appropriateness of retrieved vocabulary and direct translation of Arabic texts) were found to be strongly and positively correlated with the ten types of linguistic errors investigated in this research. On the other hand, five writing strategies (global planning, rehearsing, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising) were found to be moderately and perhaps negatively

correlated with the majority of these linguistic errors. In the next chapter, I shall move on to discuss and evaluate the implications these findings have for L2 writing pedagogy and research.

Chapter 8: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main conclusion of this study in relation to its three research questions—the main writing strategies that Saudi learners utilise when composing in English, the major linguistic challenges Saudi learners encounter when composing in English and the diverse and multi-faceted relationships that exist between the main writing strategies that Saudi learners use when composing in English and the major linguistic challenges they encounter in the said process. The implications of these findings for pedagogy (English writing instruction) are then discussed. I have also cited some of the limitations of this study. This chapter concludes with recommendations for further research in the future in the field of EFL writing strategies and challenges, from an over-arching perspective and focuses primarily on the writing of Saudi EFL learners.

8.2 Conclusions about the findings

The findings of this study provide evidence for the complex and recursive (i.e. non-linear) nature of the writing process, as proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981). Importantly, the participants' writing proficiency was found to influence the amount of recursiveness observed in their writing. Analysis of the TAP data showed that the form of composing undertaken by skilled writers was more recursive than that of their unskilled peers. This was primarily due to the fact that they frequently stopped to plan, read, rehearse and revise the text they had produced before they continued with composing. For example, planning was applied throughout the composing process. Writers were found to work methodically and systematically in a step-by-step manner throughout the planning stage. After planning, they started to engage in a recursive process that included writing, revising and encompassed yet

more planning. This finding confirms Flower and Hayes' (1980) observation on the writing process.

Unskilled writers, on the other hand, followed a less-recursive pattern, as they were less concerned with planning and revising the content of their essays than their skilled peers were. Those who revised their texts focused more on the forms of grammatical structures in their essay. As explained in Section 5.2.8 in Chapter 5, they were keener to manage words and syntactic issues than to build up and organise their thoughts. This type of process, called revising, often occurred at the final stage of writing (i.e. the post-writing stage discussed in Chapter 5). These findings are in agreement with those findings derived from previous research on EFL writers (e.g. Alharthi, 2012; Alhaysony, 2008; El-Aswad, 2002; Victori, 1999; Zamel, 1983).

Moreover, most of the unskilled writers depended on their L1 at each stage of the writing process (pre-writing, writing and post-writing). This process also occurred when using the majority of the writing strategies investigated in this study, such as global planning, local planning, awareness of the audience, evaluation, time monitoring, revising and editing. This substantial dependence on the L1 resulted in the negative transfer of the L1 rhetorical structure into the L2 written texts. As a consequential result of this heavily weighted dependence on L1, a large number of linguistic errors were made (see Section 6.2 in Chapter 6 for a discussion of these errors). This significant finding was observed in the TAPs and confirmed in the stimulated recalls. The interviewees stated that thinking in Arabic whilst writing in English was a useful tool so that they could carry on with their writing more or less without being hampered. However, they were unaware that using L1 linguistic features had an adverse effect on the accuracy of their English writing because of the substantial linguistic differences between the two languages (see Section in Chapter 3 for a discussion of the CA of English and Arabic). This practice resulted in errors in subject–verb agreement, verb tense,

modal verbs, adjective–noun order in NPs, subject–verb order in verb phrases, dropping of the subject in NPs, articles, propositions, plural forms and punctuation.

When calculated statistically, L2 writing proficiency was confirmed to significantly account for the frequent use of certain writing strategies. More specifically, unskilled writers, in comparison to their skilled peers were found to use their L1 for generating ideas, retrieving vocabulary and checking the appropriateness of the retrieved vocabulary more frequently. They also often used direct translation from L1 when writing in L2. Interestingly, global planning, awareness of the audience, evaluation and revising strategies were more frequently utilised by skilled writers. Unsurprisingly, unskilled writers made a greater number of errors than their skilled counterparts did. This observation was recurrent for each type of error; the mean for the unskilled group was much larger than that for the skilled group. All these differences were found to be statistically significant. This finding indicates that the insufficient mastery of writing skills could be contributory and concurrently responsible for the large number of errors that unskilled students make when writing in the L2.

The other variable investigated in this study was gender. As male and female students were segregated in schools, examining the possible differences in the use of writing strategies between the two genders was important. As discussed in Chapter 5, female writers used a few strategies, such as local planning, rehearsing, reading the topic, reading what has been written, using the L1 to retrieve vocabulary and revising more frequently than their male peers did. Interestingly, the results showed no significant differences between males and females in the commission of any specific types of linguistic errors.

When the writers as a whole group (including skilled and unskilled participants, as well as males and females) were examined, moderate to very strong positive correlations were found between using L1 (to generate ideas, retrieve vocabulary, check the appropriateness of the retrieved vocabulary and conduct direct translation of Arabic texts)

and all the 10 linguistic categories that were found to be challenging for the participants in this study (subject–verb agreement, verb tense, modal verbs, adjective–noun order in NPs, subject–verb order in verb phrases, dropping the subject in NPs, articles, propositions, plural forms and punctuation). On the other hand, these errors were found to be negatively correlated with the use of global planning, awareness of the audience, evaluating and revising. As pointed out in Chapter 5, the latter group of strategies was used more frequently by the skilled group of writers. Therefore, this link between writing strategies and linguistic errors is interesting and to the best of my knowledge, it has not been investigated in previous studies. A closer examination of the possible links between the previously mentioned variables could have significant and indeed useful pedagogical implications. In other words, the teaching of certain writing strategies could possibly help reduce the number of errors individuals make when writing in the L2.

8.3 Implications derived from the findings that could impact writing instruction for English in EFL contexts

The findings that have been derived from this research have, to a large extent, provided convincing evidence that L2 writing is a bilingual process, as writers have two languages available for their use (Cumming, 1990). The results also show how intrinsically on complex the nature of the writing process is. It does so by providing insights into the myriad of writing strategies relied and utilised by Arab learners, in general, and particularly Saudi learners when they are engaged in the process of composing in English. The findings also showcase and display the wide array of linguistic challenges that these learners encounter. Therefore, this study could offer useful suggestions that could contributed immensely for the teaching of English writing in Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Arab world. Furthermore, given that this study attempts to explore the inter-relationship between the strategies that different types of

learners utilise to address different types of linguistic difficulties they face in writing, the study's findings could have the potential to contribute significantly towards a better understanding of the hurdles that the learners face.

The TAPs used in this study provided valuable data on the different stages of the writing process and the strategies that the participants used when writing in English (see Section 5.2 in Chapter 5). They also explained why some of the linguistics problems occurred and how the participants addressed them (see Section 6.2 in Chapter 6). Writing teachers are therefore recommended to utilise the TAP as a useful technique in the process of obtaining relevant insights into these aspects in their classrooms and to accordingly provide the necessary tailored-support that their students may need.

The study also goes some way towards emphasising the need for writing teachers to allocate sufficient class time to draw their students' attention to the importance of writing as a process and to train them in the different stages of writing. All the more so, given that some students were found to be completely unaware of some of the writing strategies. Going forward, the findings of this study also enable writing teachers to capitalise on the strategies they know and concurrently explain to their students the value and importance of the other writing strategies and how these could help facilitate their writing. Given that there are no absolutes that could apply universally in the process of teaching and learning, these strategies should not be treated as rigid requirements. Students should be given the opportunity to select the writing strategies that best suit their goals and those that enable them to make their writing more effective (Raimes, 1985; White & Arndt, 1991).

The findings of this study were that less-skilled students did very little revision and were concerned with correcting the form rather than the content of their essay (see Section 5.2.8 in Chapter 5). Therefore, this study is able to emphasise to writing teachers that they should train their students on how to revise their essays effectively. They could do so by

showing them samples of written essays and giving them sufficient practice on how to apply the revision strategy effectively. Again, the findings of this study could provide the teachers with some general as well as specific guidance on how to this maybe best achieved.

As pointed out in Chapter 1, the skills required during the writing process do not receive sufficient attention in Saudi schools. However, a lot of attention is given to the accuracy of the final written product. Consequently, the majority of unskilled writers in this research did very little planning when writing in English and used fewer strategies in comparison with their skilled peers. Those from the unskilled group, who did attempt to revise their essays, focused more on the form of their essay which regrettably was at the expense of the content. They also used their L1 during writing, and as a direct result of doing so, they encountered many linguistic challenges. Their use of L1 was attributed to their poor English proficiency. Analysis of the TAP data showed that unskilled writers sought help from their L1, either partially or to a much greater extent bordering on complete reliance, especially when they were unable to brainstorm and construct English sentences. They turned to their L1 in order to continue with the writing task. A few students were unable to commence writing in English, so they resorted to translating L1 words and expressions. This consequently led to grammatical errors being made largely due to significant linguistic differences between the two languages.

This finding emphasises the importance of raising the students' awareness of the differences between Arabic and English linguistic structures. The findings also indicate that students should think in English and not in Arabic when writing in English and avoid the literal translation of Arabic sentences and expressions. This practice would help minimise the negative transfer of Arabic linguistic structures to English writing. In addition, writing teachers need to familiarise and tutor their students and bring to their attention at the earliest possible opportunity the unique grammatical features of the English language, paying special

attention to the ten categories that were found to be most challenging. The research findings here strongly suggest that increasing the students' English knowledge could help minimise dependence on their L1. This practice should take place throughout all the teaching stages of English writing in school as the majority of the participants complained about the poor instruction they received even before going to college. The findings of this research also are suggestive that it is beneficial for the students to receive the most effective and useful instruction from their teachers at earliest stages before dependence on L1 becomes entrenched in the mindset of the student.

8.4 Limitations of the study and reflections

As indicated in Chapter 1 (Section 1.5), this study is unique because it compares the writing processes and products of both male and female writers separately and concurrently addresses the gender differences that become apparent in this area. It also explores the most challenging linguistic aspects that are uniquely typical for skilled as well as unskilled writers. This study does, however, have a few limitations which inevitably could not have been avoided, partly due to the nature and scope of this study and partly due to the time constraints encountered.

1. The sample drawn on in the present study consisted of undergraduate students at the Department of English Language and Literature at a public university in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study may therefore not be applicable to post-graduate students at the same department or to undergraduate students at the Department of English in other regions of Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is recommended that this research be replicated with a diverse group of students at different levels of education in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, it would be preferable to involve post-graduate students, vocational students and undergraduate students belonging to different academic departments and hailing from different regions in Saudi Arabia. The

writing strategies used by EFL writers in other Arab countries and the linguistic challenges they encounter could also be investigated to explore and determine if their writing follows a pattern similar to that of the sample in this study.

2. This study investigated the writing strategies utilised by students and also sought to identify the types of challenges that the students encountered when composing a descriptive essay in English. There is a possibility that the findings may not account for the writing strategies and challenges observed in other genres of EFL writing. Hence, different genres of academic writing, such as expository, persuasive and narrative writing should also be explored in detail to develop a more comprehensive writing model.

3. This research focused on investigating L2 writing; therefore, L1 writing was not examined. Doing so may have provided useful insights into the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 writing. However, as a direct result of the large number of variables investigated in this study (10 writing strategies and 10 linguistic challenges of skilled vs. unskilled and male vs. female students), the resultant L1 data transcription, coding and analysis would not have fit within the time framework of this thesis. Therefore, further in-depth studies comparing L1 and L2 writing are needed to determine the possible influences of L1 presence and competence and the effect they have on the utilisation of L2 writing strategies. The studies in the future may also help to determine whether the linguistic challenges which students encounter vary accordingly.

8.5 Recommendations for future research

1. As mentioned in Section 8.4 above, it is recommended that this study be replicated in different EFL contexts. This may be carried out with bilingual students who have embarked on different academic majors. It could also be carried out with students who are multilingual and, also by using different genres of writing and even going so far as to give the students the

freedom to select their own topics. This too could help provide a useful insight by helping to discover if different types of writing strategies and the frequency of various linguistic challenges that manifest themselves are similar or different to the ones observed in this research.

2. This study could also be repeated with a larger sample group in order to have far-reaching pedagogical implications.

3. It is recommended that future research conducted by asking the participants to carry out TAPs in both their L1 and L2 in order to compare and contrast their L1 and L2 writing strategies and the linguistic challenges they encounter when writing in each language.

8.6 Conclusion

This study set out to fill the gap in the L2 writing literature and contribute to the development of an L2 writing model by investigating in depth both the process and the product of L2 writing. It correlated the strategies that writers use when composing in English with the linguistic challenges they encounter. By conducting a study on such challenges, this research now hopes to draw the attention of EFL teachers' to these challenges so that policy makers, educators and teachers are better placed to collectively as well as in their own individual capacities, help learners overcome such difficulties and at the very least help minimise the obstacles and challenges that they encounter.

Appendix C: The Writing Proficiency Test

Please write no less than 300 words.

You have 50 minutes to finish writing your essay.

Please note that no dictionary or talking to peers is allowed throughout this session.

Write an English essay to describe your role model in life. Support your answer with details and examples.

Appendix D: The Writing Prompt for the TAP

Please read the following instructions carefully:

1. Make sure that you switch on the audio tape once you are given the prompt.

2. Read and understand the question carefully before you start writing.

3. Write normally as you would always write, but ensure that you verbalise whatever comes into your mind.

4. Keep speaking aloud with no pauses even if you are thinking, deleting, changing or revising. You can use any language that you are comfortable with.

5. You have 75 minutes to finish this task.

Prompt:

Write an English essay to describe your childhood and compare it with your life now?

Appendix E: The Simulated Recall Prompts

Warm-up questions:

1. Why did you choose to major in English?
2. How would you consider your English writing skill?
3. Do you practice English writing outside the classroom setting?

Main questions:

As mentioned in Section 4.3.3 in Chapter 4, the main questions varied depending on the observations made during the TAP of each writer. The questions included in this part were:

4. Why did you make a plan before starting to write your essay?
(Or: Why did you start to write immediately without making planning?)
5. I noticed that you did some planning again - after writing a whole paragraph. Why was that? Why did you need to plan during writing (in addition to the planning you did before writing)?
6. Why did you repeat/read these words/this sentence several times?
7. Why did you use Arabic when you were trying to write the sentence/idea (...)?
8. I noticed that you were aware of the possible reader(s) of your essay, how did that influence your writing?
9. I noticed that you were monitoring the time while writing, why did you do that?
10. I noticed that you constantly evaluated/revised/edited (or did not evaluate revise/edit) your essay. Can you explain to me why did or did not?
11. In *this question, I point to several errors made by the participants and attempted to elicit some information about the possible causes of those errors, for example:*
Why did you write “uniform nice” instead of “nice uniform”?

Closure:

12. Do you think getting feedback on your writing will help to improve it?

Finally, I thanked the participant and offered to provide feedback on his/her writing if he/she was interested.

Appendix F: Scoring Scheme for the Writing Proficiency Test

Jacobs et al.'s ESL writing profile (1981)

Category	Score	Criteria
Content	30-20	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** knowledgeable - substantive thorough development of thesis - relevant to assigned topic.
	26-22	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** some knowledge of subject - adequate range - limited development of thesis - mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail
	21-17	**FAIR TO POOR:** limited knowledge of subject - little substance •inadequate development of topic
	16-13	**VERY POOR:** does not show knowledge of subject - non-substantive - non pertinent - OR not enough to evaluate
Organization	20-18	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** fluent expression • ideas clearly stated/ supported - succinct - well-organized - logical sequencing - cohesive
	17-14	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** somewhat choppy - loosely organized but main ideas stand out - limited support - logical but incomplete sequencing
	13-10	**FAIR TO POOR:** non-fluent - ideas confused or disconnected - lacks logical sequencing and development
	9-7	**VERY POOR:** does not communicate - no organization - OR not enough to evaluate
Language Use	25-22	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** effective complex constructions - few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, article, pronouns, prepositions
	21-18	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** effective but simple constructions - minor problems in complex constructions - several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, article, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured
	17-18	**FAIR TO POOR:** major problems in simple/ complex constructions - frequent errors of negation, tense, number, word order/function, article, pronouns, prepositions and/ or fragments, run-ons, deletions - meaning confused or obscured
	10-5	**VERY POOR:** virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules - dominated by errors - does not communicate - OR not enough to evaluate
Vocabulary	20-18	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** sophisticated range - effective word/idiom choice and usage - word for mastery - appropriate register
	17-14	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** adequate range - occasional errors of effective word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured
	13-10	**FAIR TO POOR:** limited range - frequent errors of effective word/idiom form, choice, usage - meaning confused or obscured
	9-7	**VERY POOR:** essentially translation - little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form - OR not enough to evaluate

Mechanics	5	**EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:** demonstrates mastery of conventions - few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing
	4	**GOOD TO AVERAGE:** occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing but meaning not obscured
	3	**FAIR TO POOR:** frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing - poor handwriting - meaning confused or obscured
	2	**VERY POOR:** no mastery of conventions - dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing - handwriting illegible - OR not enough to evaluate

Appendix G: List of Participants' Codes

Participant's code	Meaning
SM1	Skilled male 1
SM2	Skilled male 2
SM3	Skilled male 3
SM4	Skilled male 4
SM5	Skilled male 5
SM6	Skilled male 6
SM7	Skilled male 7
SM8	Skilled male 8
SM9	Skilled male 9
SF1	Skilled female 1
SF2	Skilled female 2
SF3	Skilled female 3
SF4	Skilled female 4
SF5	Skilled female 5
UM1	Unskilled male 1
UM2	Unskilled male 2
UM3	Unskilled male 3
UM4	Unskilled male 4
UM5	Unskilled male 5
UM6	Unskilled male 6
UM7	Unskilled male 7
UM8	Unskilled male 8
UM9	Unskilled male 9
UF1	Unskilled female 1
UF2	Unskilled female 2
UF3	Unskilled female 3
UF4	Unskilled female 4
UF5	Unskilled female 5

Appendix H: List of Codes Used to Analyse the TAP Transcripts

CODE	EXPLANATION
LP	Local planning
GP	Global planning
RH	Rehearsing
RT	Reading the topic
RW	Reading what has been written
L1GI	Using L1 to generating idea
L1RV	Using L1 to retrieve vocabulary
L1CA	Using L1 to check the appropriateness of retrieved word
L1T	Direct translation of Arabic texts
AA	Awareness of the audience
PE	Positive evaluation
NE	Negative evaluation
TM	Time monitoring expression
RE	Revising content (adding, deleting or substituting parts of the text)
ED	Editing (grammar, punctuation or spelling)
PP	Postponing
AV	Avoidance
GS	Guessing
RG	Recalling grammar rules

Appendix I: List of Codes Used to Analyse the Written Products of the TAPs

CODE	ERROR CATEGORY
1	Subject-verb agreement
2	Verb tense
3	Modal verbs
4	Subject-verb order in verb phrases
5	Adjective-noun order in noun phrases
6	Dropping the subject
7	Articles
8	Prepositions
9	Plural forms
10	Punctuation

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